Miss Fenwick's Failures.

By Esmé Stuart.

NELLY BEGINS HER STORY.

MISS FENWICK'S FAILURES

OR, "PEGGY PEPPER-POT."

BY

ESMÈ STUART,

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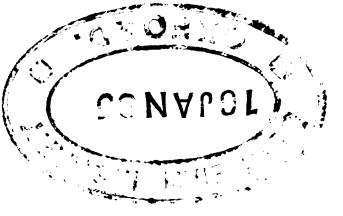
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MISS FENWICK'S FAILURES.

CHAPTER I.

A MERRY MULTITUDE.

"NUMBER 13 Warcote Square," said a young but very decided voice from the inside of a "Four-wheeler" in answer to the question of an aged cabman, who looked in again upon his fare, having failed to understand the footman who had ceremoniously called out the address to him.

"What number did you say, missy?"

Peggy drew herself up to her full height and repeated sternly the above address, feeling decidedly injured at being called "missy."

"It's very cool of him, I think; he ought to say 'miss' or 'ma'am.' He doesn't know that I'm the eldest at home, I suppose, and that now I am going to take care of father's house and see after the others."

At this thought *Miss* Fenwick sat still more upright, and took her umbrella in her hand, ready for any emergency; and though the attitude was by no means graceful, yet in spite of this,

plan must be arranged for Nelly and the other
You see, Miss Bellew, there's such a jolly lot c
us that—"

"Do you all talk slang?" interrupted Mis
Bellew quietly, but in a tone that made poo
Peggy wince. She would very much have like
to have shaken the family friend.

"That isn't slang," she said evasively.

"I dare say not. When I was young we wer
allowed to use no unlady-like expressions. Sup
pose you say 'a merry multitude' instead of
'jolly lot,' my dear."

Peggy was disarmed for a moment, thoug
naturally she was not going to be beaten.

"But we are not always merry, and there i
always a jolly lot of us."

"Ah, poor child!" said Miss Bellew dolefully
at which Peggy's evil temper came back again
She could not bear to be called "poor child;" sh
meant to show she was not a child at all, but he
father's right hand and the correct elder sister.

"I must go home to early dinner," she said
rising, glad she could now take her leave.

"But you have not heard why I sent for you
my dear Margaret. I want you to explain t
your father that I know the very person wh
will suit him exactly and look after—not you, o
course, my dear — but the others; she is ver
motherly and nice."

"Thank you, I will tell him. May James cal
a cab, Miss Bellew?"

"Ah! yes, my dear. I see you are in a hurr
this morning. I suppose you cannot stay to lun
cheon?"

"Oh, no, thank you, Miss Bellew; the others will be expecting me."

It must be acknowledged that Peggy said this in a very grand manner, as if "the others" would eat nothing till she came home, did she delay even till evening, and this tone called forth another expression of the family friend's mind.

"Remember, Margaret, that you are not much older than Maurice and Nelly, and ruling your brothers and sisters is a dangerous experiment."

The cab was at the door, so that Peggy pretended she had not heard the good advice, and said "Good-bye!" hoping she might not see Miss Bellew again for a long long time.

"I do dislike her," thought Peggy; "she is always interfering with us. Why should she, just because she was at school with mother? I do think a family friend is the most tiresome creature in the world."

Then Margaret looked out of the cab-window and saw the people hurrying past, all bent on business, some eager, thinking only of the matter in hand; others listless and dawdling, as if the day was of no consequence to them because to-morrow would follow. Perhaps in all this living London there was no more eager, impatient, self-depending soul than Peggy. How could she fail in what was now her mission in life when she was going to devote all her energies to it?

Suddenly Peggy started up, poked her head out of the window, and called out to the ancient cabman, feeling a little glad to revenge herself for "missy":

"You are taking the wrong side of the square—number 13, I told you, cabman."

The four-wheeler turned slowly, and Peggy, very red in the face from her exertion, sat down again, murmuring:

"Stupid old man! why, he might have known better if he had thought a minute."

Then the cab stopped at number 13, and Peggy jumped out before the driver had time to get off his box, handed him his fare with a resolute air of not being cheated, and ran up the steps, giving the knocker a rap in no very gentle manner. But then no one ever accused Peggy of being too gentle.

The "jolly lot," *alias* the "merry multitude," were all on the *qui vive*, for it was past dinner-time, and more or less hunger prevailed among the young Fenwicks.

"Nelly, Nelly!" called out Peggy sharply, "are you all ready for dinner? Tell nurse to send Toddles down-stairs."

"I'se coming—I'se awful hungry!" called out that young gentleman, bustling down-stairs in a queer little imitation of Peggy herself, whilst Nelly walked demurely behind him in case of accidents. Nelly was a striking contrast to her elder sister; she was fair and delicate-looking, with dreamy eyes and a sweet but over-sensitive mouth. Her black dress made her look even paler and thinner than usual. One thing was plain, however, and this was that Nelly was by no means as capable as Miss Fenwick.

"Maurice!" next called out Peggy impatiently, "dinner is ready; why don't you all come down when the bell rings?"

"It rang ever so long ago," said Maurice, who came sauntering out of the school-room muttering; "besides, why weren't you at home in time?"

Maurice was so exactly like Nelly, except that he was taller and more delicate-looking, that there was no difficulty in believing they were twins; and in their intercourse with each other there was also something unusual. Maurice never dreamt of teasing Nelly as he did his other sisters.

In the dining-room Carry, a little girl about nine years old, was already seated in her place, carrying on a lively conversation with Mary the parlour-maid. Carry's face made one fancy that all her features had been left unfinished whilst in process of making; she had a small snub-nose, small eyes, with a half-opened look in the lids, and a rounded chin; even her hair was brushed smooth and held tightly back by a round comb. Maurice called her "a pert miss," and the name was not inappropriate.

Happily for Peggy, one of the merry multitude, Arthur by name, was at school, and Busy Bee was only just emerging from the nursery.

When grace was said, the ill-temper of some of Peggy's charges burst forth. Maurice began:

"I *do* think, Peggy, you might have said you were going to be late—it is too bad. I rushed home from my organ practice so as to be in time, and then found you were out."

"Miss Bellew kept me waiting whilst she talked to some stupid old woman," said Peggy by way of excuse.

"I didn't do any more lessons, Margaret," put

in Carry, "because you said you would tell m what to do when you came home."

The tone was full of righteous sorrow at hav ing been prevented from doing the right numbe of lessons, though Carry's idleness was proverbia

"You can do the rest this afternoon," sai Peggy.

"Oh! Why, Peggy, I *never* do lessons in th afternoon—only my needlework. I declare it' too bad. Why, I sha'n't get any playtime at a to-day."

"What did Miss Bellew want you for?" sai Nelly's gentle voice.

"Business," answered Peggy grandly; where upon Nelly blushed, a little hurt, and relapse into silence, though her sister added:

"Did father send word that he wouldn't b home for lunch?"

"Yes, miss," said Mary, who was kept hard a work feeding the multitude.

"Why does father call it lunch and we dinner? asked Toddles in a very demure voice; "it's jus the same things—mutton, and p'tatoes, and pud din'. Is it when people is big that they cal their dinner lunch, Margate?"

But Peggy answered:

"Do say 'Mar*ga*ret,' Toddles; you can speal quite plainly if you like."

Nelly looked up quickly at her elder sister.

"Oh, Peggy! I do like to hear Toddles sa funny things. Please, don't correct him, mo—"

Then Nelly stopped; she had fancied she coul say the word "mother"—Peggy always did, o principle, now her mother was no more with them

but no, Nelly could not follow her sister's example; her eyes filled with tears, and she was unable to finish her dinner. Only such a short time ago "mother" had been with them—not seated at this table, it was true, but upstairs; and "upstairs" all their little differences had been taken, all their doubts settled, even though Peggy was nominally mistress below. One of the last things her mother had said to Nelly was, "Try to look upon Peggy as taking my place, darling; she is so energetic, so clever, she never spares herself, and she wants to do her best, I know." All this was true; but then Peggy was often very cross—she expected such unquestioning obedience —and after all she was not much more than a year her senior.

Already the struggle had begun, though as yet almost unconsciously, between Peggy and her brothers and sisters. It was true they knew that Peggy was a clever manager and able to make father comfortable; and if she had let the elder ones help her they would have been proud to be associated in the work, and delighted if they, too, could have helped to fill "mother's place." But no, Peggy would not hear of that; she said Nelly was always dawdling or dreaming, and Maurice was so delicate; besides, it was easier to do things herself than to be always telling the others what she wanted, and when she did them she knew they would be right.

The rest of the meal was rather silent, because Peggy was thinking about Miss Bellew's words. That "motherly person" was just the last person to have in the house; she would be sure to order

everybody about, sure to make mistakes about the children. These thoughts kept Peggy from interfering with the others, and Nelly, feeling snubbed, said nothing more. Maurice, too, was cross, only Carry was heard carrying on a small squabble with Toddles, something after this fashion:

"You shouldn't hold your knife like that, Toddles, it's wrong."

"Nurse always does, so there, Carry, it isn't wrong.—Peggy."

"Yes," answered Peggy absently.

"Does nurse ever do what's wrong?"

"No, of course not," said Peggy, wishing to uphold nurse's wisdom and authority.

"There, Carry, didn't I say so? I'se right, you see, nurse always scrapes up her gravy like this with her knife, but I'se afraid to cut myself; when I get bigger I shall do it too; sha'n't I, Peggy?"

"Yes, of course," answered Peggy without thinking, for she was saying to herself: "I'll ask father about it. I don't believe he wants to put anybody over *me*." A giggle from Carry recalled her to the dinner-table.

"Carry!"

"But, Peggy, you said Toddles might eat his gravy with his knife when he was bigger."

"I *said* she said so," answered Toddles, becoming red with righteous indignation, and Peggy, not seeing a way out of the difficulties, suddenly rose from the table, said grace, and sent Toddles back to the nursery. Next she found some occupation for Carry, told Nelly her music-master Mr.

Hart was coming this afternoon, as father did not wish them to be idle any longer; and then she ran up to her own room, bent on having an interview at once with her father. If Peggy formed an idea she was always eager to carry it out then and there, and as nurse expressed it, "No grass had ever time to grow under Miss Margaret's feet."

CHAPTER II.

FATHER'S SHOP.

FROM their earliest childhood it had bee the great treat of the little Fenwick to go and see father's shop. What fair tales and legends were to other childre "father's shop" was to them, for in it could b found the beautiful, the mysterious, and even th practical; there was something for all tastes. Be sides, the treat was not a common one. None them ever went there without leave, and if o of them was naughty on a week-day the Sund visit to the shop was forbidden. When there, t there was no racing about, or romping allowe They might sit in odd corners, or attend to the father's explanation, or the little ones might liste to one of Nelly's stories; but the very atmosphe of the shop was different to the common a they breathed at home. There was always wh Nelly called "a Sunday feeling" about it, an no one ever came back to No. 13 Warcote Square i a temper, or cross, or peevish, after having spen the afternoon in that wonderful place.

You will be wondering what father sold in thi shop; but the truth was that what the Fenwick called a shop was a studio. It consisted of a ver

large building or hall on the ground-floor, and above this a large room, and also a smaller one where Mr. Fenwick received special visitors; but all these apartments contained curious and beautiful things, their owner being a sculptor of great repute. In the upper room there were small figures in bronze, casts of heads, and marble busts. Here and there against the wall stood a large statue in plaster, the original in marble or stone being far away in a public building, or perhaps in a church. Many other things there were which it would take too long to describe. In the great hall below men were busy with the half-finished statues. Here, too, Mr. Fenwick himself worked, arrayed in a white blouse, and with a little velvet cap on his head. It was here he modelled and superintended the rough chiselling of the stone by his men, which was done by the help of most precise and careful measurement till the figure was far enough advanced for the master's hand once more to work on it. To-day Peggy had made up her mind to go to the studio uninvited; she must speak to her father at once. The workshop was not very far from Warcote Square, so that Peggy, having seen that the others were disposed of, as she expressed it to herself, put on her hat and jacket and went out, telling Nelly that she was coming back very soon.

Peggy knew the way well enough, for on rare occasions her invalid mother had sent her with a note to her father. She could not help thinking now as she walked along the quiet streets and squares—for there was but little traffic here—of that mother who would never again send her with

messages, or say softly that "dear Peggy was h right hand;" not that at other times Mrs. Fenwic had not also often said, "Try and be patient an gentle, dear Peggy, with the others, especiall when I am no longer with you;" but this Pegg did not wish to remember, though the other sen tence was imprinted on her memory. Yes; sh had been her mother's right hand, and she mean father to think and say the same of her now h mother was dead.

At Peggy's quick, resolute pace it did not tak her very long to reach the workshop. First sh turned into a small court, on one side of whic was a great iron gate; then she pulled a bell, an after a few minutes there appeared a workma who peered through the railing, and then, seein Peggy, began to unlock the gate.

"It's you, Miss Fenwick! The Master did n say you were expected to-day." The workme always called Mr. Fenwick the Master.

"No, Stephens; but will you please ask him t come and see me a minute upstairs?" The ga was now unfastened, and Peggy, following St phens along a small passage, ran up a flight stairs at the end of it, without noticing, as Ne always did, the great plaster casts which seem to be guarding the entrance, and giving a qua look to the passage.

Peggy did not dare to go into the great h without leave; but upstairs in the small priv room no workman ever came. She now sat d there in a quaint arm-chair with carved c serving for legs, and gazed at a small statu presenting an ancient Roman in the act of

ling a huge piece of rock. Peggy liked this littl figure, there was a great deal of power about i and she too felt able to lift up a weight and hu it somewhere; but to-day her meditation was n of long duration. There was a firm quick ste on the stairs, and in another moment her fathe opened the door, saying hurriedly:

"Is there anything the matter at home, Peggy? Mr. Fenwick was a tall, well-built, handsom man. He had dark deep-set eyes, strongly marked eyebrows, a straight nose, and a firm mouth, so that he inspired every one with respec but also with a little fear, and yet with his chil dren he could at times be as gentle as a woman.

Strange to say, however, Mr. Fenwick wante sympathy from others, and was perhaps rathe easily annoyed with the small troubles of life He had just gone through a terrible sorrow in th loss of his wife, and for the time his mind seeme hardly capable of taking in anything but thi grief. She had made a sunshine of happiness i his life, and now she was gone he felt utterly los without her. His only solace was his work, s for this reason he threw himself into it as if his ow and his children's bread depended upon it. Peggy' unexpected appearance had startled him an brought back to him with a keen pang the know ledge that at home his children had now onl himself to look to.

"Oh no, father!" said Peggy, just a little fright ened at her father's tone; "there is nothing at al the matter at home, why should there be?"

"Then why did you come here?"

"You know I have been to Miss Bellew to-day

and she says she knows exactly the person th will do to look after the little ones; but you trust me, don't you, father, and you won't p any one over me? You know mother always me do everything. I have been her housekeep for more than a year, and I *do* know all her wa and—I mean better than a stranger could ev know."

"Is that what you came to say?" remarked M Fenwick, turning away a little impatiently; p haps it was to hide his feelings also, for he cou not yet bear to hear even her children say t word "mother," though he would not for t world prevent them from doing it.

"Yes," said Peggy quickly; "because, perha you will write to Miss Bellew this evening a tell her this—person—this lady might just co and see if she would like the situation, becau of course, Carry wants a good deal of teachi and I can't do everything."

Perhaps the earnestness of the tone and t decided clear manner in which Peggy express her ideas, carried conviction with them; then, t her father remembered how useful his elde daughter had been during her mother's illne and he said to himself that it was not to be e pected that Peggy would like to be displace Certainly she was clever and wise for her ag Why should she not go on taking her mothe place? Still he hesitated.

"You are young, Peggy, to have so many car put upon you. I don't want to make you o before your time."

"But, indeed, it won't do that, father. I shou

be far more unhappy if we had a stupid fashio
able governess who would treat me as a chil
Only, of course, you will tell Nelly and Mauri
that you mean me to be head, or—or they will—

Peggy coloured up and looked so very mu
distressed that her father suddenly noticed it.

"What will they do?" he asked, laughing
little at the idea of quiet Nelly doing anythi
very preposterous.

"They won't obey me," said Peggy very ea
nestly. She knew that without her fathe
authority to uphold her all she said would n
meet with due recognition from the others; ev
Carry might defy her. Before Mrs. Fenwick
death, when Peggy came with an order into t
school-room, it had always been:

"I'll ask mother if she said so."

"I think they will, especially if I wish it," sa
Mr. Fenwick; "but come, Peggy, I am busy to-da
You don't want me to write to Miss Bellew
once, do you?"

"No, only just a note before post time, that
all, and—and—" Peggy stood up, and taking h
father's arm she half hid her face in it. "Ar
father, I will try to be a mother to Bee a
Toddles. They can't help loving me if I am go
to them."

"Thank you, Peggy," said her father, layi
his hand for a moment on the girl's should
"God bless you, my child;" and then he turn
hastily away, and Peggy heard him go dow
stairs. She knew she had now gained her poi
so, only waiting till her father entered the l
hall, she took her departure, casting one glan

at the bronze of the athletic Roman as she passed out. She, too, was taking up her burden, confident that she could carry it, and it was this new work which prevented her feeling her mother's death as acutely as did the other members of the family. The first few days after their loss had been terrible; but then youth had regained its elasticity, and Peggy decided it was no use crying any more. She even felt a little impatient with Nelly for moping in corners, and with Maurice for showing his sorrow by being unusually cross. All this could not bring mother back, and so Peggy settled within herself that any further demonstration of grief was useless.

When she re-entered the house she found only Maurice in the school-room. Nelly had taken Carry and the two little ones in the Square, as it was unusually warm weather for April, and there they could enjoy themselves after their own fashion. Maurice was preparing some Latin for his tutor the next morning.

The boy's great trouble was his weak health, which prevented him from going to school. For one ever-to-be-remembered term he had been sent to a public school; but he had fallen ill, and the doctors all pronounced him unfit for school life. Maurice hated being at home, and did not love his books; but his one consolation was music. In a church opposite No. 13 there was a very good organ which he was allowed to play upon any afternoon, and here he spent a great deal of his leisure time.

He was very fond of his twin sister Nelly, who returned his affection; but Peggy he thought w

much too interfering and managing; besides, in his secret soul he envied her the splendid health that reminded him still more of his weakness. Nothing tired Peggy, and sometimes he could not help fancying she ought to have been the boy and he the girl.

Just now Peggy appeared especially aggravating as she sat down opposite to him.

"I've been to father, and he says I am to be head of the house, and that if we have a governess it's not to be one who will order me about."

"Don't jaw," said Maurice, forgetting his manners; but Peggy was so very "bumptious," as he expressed it to himself.

"Well, Maurice, I do think you needn't be so cross. I'm sure mother wouldn't have liked it."

"Shut up, can't you?" was the answer. "I want to do this old Latin. I'm sure I don't care if you're head or tail, though I'm sorry for the household."

"Oh, Maurice!" Peggy was deeply hurt.

"So I am. Girls make such a to-doing over their business."

"You never think of doing anything but just as you like," began Peggy, forgetting that, as head of the household, she should not condescend to argue or tell such plain truths. "You never think of helping me, or looking after Toddles, or anything but the organ; and I'm sure *I* never do anything I like all day long. I haven't read a story-book for weeks."

"You like jawing and ordering better than any story-book." Maurice was still more cross because Peggy had spoken the truth.

"That isn't true;" and Peggy jumped up from her chair with anger. "I wish father could hear you say such very unkind things."

"Peggy Pepper-pot!" muttered Maurice, pretending to be calmly looking out a word in the dictionary. Now, if there was one thing above all others that put Peggy into a temper it was to be called Peggy Pepper-pot. This terrible name had been invented by Maurice some time ago, when one day his eldest sister had been in a "wax;" and the little ones had thought it such a good joke that even Toddles had been heard to lisp it over to himself, *Peggy Pffeffer-pot.* Thereupon Mrs. Fenwick had interfered, and had forbidden the name to be used. To hear it now when Peggy had come home, feeling elated at her new position, was more than the girl's nature could bear; she rushed past her brother, upsetting a chair on the way, slammed the door, and ran upstairs to her own room.

"It's very, very unkind of Maurice," she said, angrily pacing up and down, "especially now when mother is dead. I wonder he can. I don't believe he cared a bit about her—not one bit. I wish he were at school, like Arthur."

In the meanwhile Nelly was sitting in the Square with Carry by her side, and the little ones on two tiny chairs in front of her. Busy Bee was the dearest little girl imaginable, whom it was impossible not to love, and everyone did love her in her own home. She had large blue eyes, a pretty bright colour, and the dearest little fat legs and arms imaginable. But what was specially comical about her were her demure ways; Bee

never romped or screamed like other little girls of four years old. Everything she did seemed to have been deeply thought out, and then performed with precision. She was never in the way, but sometimes crept up near one of the family, and taking her special stool, would sit down and listen to what was being said, or else wind her dimpled arms round Maurice or Nelly, and whisper a great secret in their ear—"Busy Bee 'oves you."

Busy Bee had, besides, great reasoning powers. She never let anyone find out which of the household she "'oved" best. She knew that all of them loved her, and so would not make anyone jealous by declaring her preference.

Now and then Maurice said, half in fun and half to tease her:

"Come, Busy Bee, tell me whom you love best;" but the child was quite equal to the occasion. "I loves everybody best," she answered solemnly; and no one had ever made her say anything else. However, it was near sister Nelly that she oftenest drew up her little chair. As to Toddles, he was very unlike his little sister. Two years older he was many years more troublesome; and, as nurse expressed it, "Master Toddles is such a pickle that he ought to be bottled down and well corked up, and even then most likely he would ferment and burst his bonds. Why, Miss Bee was as mild as new milk, and quite an example to her brother." This example Toddles never had the slightest intention of following; but, strange to say, many as were his sins, teasing Bee was not one of them. Perhaps the little girl was too dignified to allow such a liberty to be taken with

her, or perhaps Toddles preferred having one friend to whom he could talk confidentially when he was in a quiet mood. Whatever might be the reason, the Fenwick household was spared the misfortune of hearing screams or sounds of quarrelling issue from the nursery.

Carry was learning her poetry for the next day, walking up and down the Square, so Nelly was left to entertain the little ones, and she willingly did so, even though *Ivanhoe* was on her lap, and she was deeply interested in this story.

"It's your turn, Nelly, to tell a story now," said Bee. "I'se busy over my work." This was a piece of cross-stitch done with the utmost neatness and precision.

"I never heard *your* story," said Toddles indignantly. "You haven't told any, Bee."

"Yes, I have," answered that young lady, not in the least discomfited. "I'll tell it again if you both likes."

"Do, please, Bee," said Nelly, trying to go on with *Ivanhoe* on the sly, yet knowing that very soon the children would say her turn had come to tell a story.

"Here's my story," said Bee. "Once upon a time there was a little girl called Busy Bee, and she had one, two, three, four, five, six brothers and sisters, and they all died and lived happy ever after."

"We're not dead," said Toddles, "and we isn't happy all of us. Peggy was not *very* happy today."

"I've done my story; now, it's Nelly's turn," said Bee, taking no notice of the critic. Nelly

looked up from *Ivanhoe*, and knowing she must give it up, did so with a good grace.

"What shall it be—*Red Riding-Hood?*"

"We know all those stupid things by heart," said Toddles grandly.

"One of your very own making up, sister Nelly," said Busy Bee. Nelly thought a minute, shutting her eyes, and seeking an inspiration. Her power of making up stories was known to the little ones, who appreciated it much, but the rest of her family thought nothing of it, and Peggy called it "some of Nelly's rubbish." Nelly did not seek for any praise. She was far too shy of notice to do this; but beneath her shyness she hid no ordinary imagination, and a kind of dreamy genius, which might grow with time if it were not too rudely nipped in the bud. It was this true artistic feeling within her which made Nelly hide her talents as far as possible from everyone except the little ones. Their criticisms were always of the kindest, and now and then truer than those of older people. Thus it happened that Nelly's stories were often quite beyond the understanding of her audience; but in spite of this they thought them lovely. In the dull Square the trio were very happy this afternoon, and when Nelly showed she was ready to begin, two pair of eyes were fixed on her face.

"When did you last go to father's shop?" asked Nelly as a prelude.

"Two Sundays ago; but, Nelly, that isn't a story of your own making up," said Bee.

"That's not fair," began Toddles; "that's asking questions—not telling a story."

"But what did you see there?"

"Lots of things. The big man in the passage; the one Bee calls the giant, and—"

"Well, did you notice his great shield, and his sword, and a battle-axe at his side?"

"That's nice," said Toddles, chuckling at the bare idea of hearing something about fighting.

"What's his name?" asked Bee, who was accustomed to be asked hers when strangers came.

"He is called Rudolph, and has always to be on his guard against enemies, and one especially is constantly following him to kill him."

"Doesn't he ever sleep?" asked Toddles.

"No; because the king who had given him his sword told him that if ever he allowed his enemy to steal it from him he would be lost, and his enemy would make him a slave, so Rudolph kept strict watch; but one day—"

This beginning promised well, and both children drew nearer to their sister in token of satisfaction. Nelly, on her side, had already conjured up Rudolph as if he were in some mysterious allegorical land. What Mr. Fenwick had intended to represent as merely a northern warrior, his daughter now reclothed with new ideas of her own. Her blue eyes kindled brightly, her pale face flushed as she wove a tale of adventure, not altogether original, but suggested by the many allegories and legends with which her mind was filled, and which she now shaped anew with that delicate mental chiselling which genius alone can accomplish. As for the children, nothing was too minute or quaint for them, nothing too marvellous to believe or too fanciful to accept. Such

listeners are indeed rare. It was at the most exciting part of the story that Peggy's voice was heard preceding her. "Nelly, Nelly, wherever *are* you?"

Nelly jumped up, conscience-stricken. In telling her story she had forgotten her music-master, and Peggy was come, in great and righteous indignation, to remind her of him.

"Mr. Hart is waiting for you, Nelly. I did remind you before I went out. It is too bad of you. I can't do more than remind people. You know quite well it makes Mr. Hart very cross to be kept waiting." Certainly Nelly knew it. She had before suffered from her master's temper, but it did not make it easier to bear, to have a previous scolding from Peggy.

"I forgot," she said as she hurried away. "I was amusing the children."

"You always think that an excuse," said Peggy. "I am sure I don't know what would become of us all if I forgot papa's things." But Nelly had sped across the square, and run up the white steps of No. 13, feeling much ruffled. Her mind had been wandering in enchanted ground, and reality was hard to bear.

Peggy in the meanwhile had turned back to where the children were sitting, having listened to this little episode with open ears and eyes.

"Was it the Enemy that came for Nelly?" asked Toddles anxiously, whilst Bee looked round the bushes as if expecting to find him there.

"What are you talking about, Toddles? You shouldn't call Mr. Hart names."

"It's a story Nelly was telling us, Peggy; but it's true too; she said so. Didn't she, Bee?"

"Yes," said Bee demurely, "it's all true somehow. Nelly said so."

"I am sure I don't know what you are talking about, children. You had better come home with me now. I will read you the giant-killer." Peggy was secretly jealous of Nelly's influence with the babies. She could not help seeing that with her sister they were always good; but that even when most kind to them, she herself did not succeed in keeping them quiet and amused.

CHAPTER III.

MISS HONEYBUN.

PEGGY'S task was not to become easier for the next week. Arthur came home from school. He was two years older than Carry, and gave himself airs on account of being a schoolboy. He was certainly a handful, and even Nelly had no influence over him. Peggy ruled him, or tried to rule him, by sheer force; she would be obeyed, she said to herself; she would faithfully fulfil her mother's trust.

But the fire which had been smouldering ever since their mother's death burst forth a week after Arthur came home. Peggy had insisted on his washing his hands before luncheon, a proper and natural wish; but Arthur, having come down without performing this little act of necessary cleansing, wasn't going to be sent upstairs before the "little ones and all."

Mr. Fenwick was not at home that day, and Peggy felt her authority at stake.

"Arthur, you *are* to go," said the eldest sister in her firm, decided voice; "I insist upon it."

"Then you may insist," muttered Arthur. Peggy became crimson with anger.

"Arthur!" Carry was secretly delighted; she had had a struggle over her lessons that very morning with Peggy; but in her case Peggy had conquered. She hoped that Arthur would hold out. Maurice was pretending to take no notice, but his feelings were much the same as Carry's. Nelly alone murmured:

"Oh, Arthur, do go!"

"I sha'n't," said Arthur. "I don't see what right Peggy has to be so ordering; it's just tyranny I call it."

"Father said I was to take mother's place," said Peggy, with a certain amount of dignity; she might even now have conquered if Maurice had been on her side, but he was not, for he added fuel to the flame by saying:

"Mother never jawed as you do." Peggy was deeply hurt at the line Maurice took. Was it possible that they were all against her? If they were, she wouldn't care, she would conquer; she would do it for her father's sake.

"Very well, Arthur, if you won't go you shall have no dinner with the others;" and Peggy began carving the leg of mutton with terrible energy.

Arthur sat out during dinner, receiving much commiseration in the shape of scraps from Toddles, and half a jam tart from Carry, which good things, however, he was not allowed to eat. The meal, a very silent one, being finished, Peggy rose with dignity.

"Now, Arthur, you can have your dinner if you like."

"Don't want any," was the decided answer;

but it was far from truthful, for Arthur was very hungry.

"Father wants me this afternoon, so, Carry, you can go out with nurse and the little ones; and mind you are all in to tea, somebody's coming."

But Peggy once away "the merry multitude" had a plan of their own to carry out. They were all in the school-room, when Arthur, who had had his dinner, in spite of his protestation, said in a loud voice:

"I say, it's too bad! Peggy's become unbearable since,"—he paused, "since I was here last. I don't see why she should domineer over us like this. I won't stand it."

"She's always nagging," chimed in Maurice, "just because she's got father to say she is to be head. However she isn't going to rule me; if you weren't so meek and silly, Nelly, she wouldn't rule you."

"She's awfully cross with me," put in Carry. "I sha'n't stand it either."

"Oh! Carry, she's much older than you are," said Nelly, divided between her wish to do right and her anxiety to take Maurice's side.

"It's just shameful," said Arthur. "We might as well all be black slaves and she our master."

"Peggy Pepper-pot, that's just her name. I am sure I should like her to be eldest, and all that sort of thing, if she wouldn't do it in that particular way," said Maurice. "Why, she's always finding fault about my playing the organ."

"Let's rebel," cried Arthur. "Shall we have a barring-out, or send her to Coventry, or what?"

"No," said Maurice solemnly, "we'll disinherit her; she sha'n't be eldest any more."

"No, please, don't," pleaded Nelly, as if the words would fulfil the threat.

"Yes, it's too late now; we have given her a whole month to get used to it, and she only does it more. I vote we disinherit her; we'll put you in her place, Nelly. I've read of that in books."

"It's fathers who do that, Maurice. I don't think brothers and sisters ever do."

"Never mind, we'll be the first."

"But how will you do it?" cried Carry, delighted at helping to disinherit her sister. "Won't it be like Esau and Jacob?"

"No, not a bit. In the first place, we won't believe in Peggy's, 'Father said so.' It's my belief she just invents that to frighten us into obedience."

"We don't believe it now," said Arthur; "but what else?"

"Oh, well, lots of things!" Maurice was himself puzzled as to the manner of disinheriting his elder.

"Now, well, say it all round, 'Peggy is disinherited.'" It was quite a solemn moment as they obeyed Maurice and repeated the words after him. Could Peggy have witnessed this scene she would have been sadly grieved and humbled at the result of her rule—after such a few short weeks. Poor Peggy, and yet her intentions had been of the best in many ways; but at the bottom of her heart pride had ruled. She was proud of her capabilities for work, proud of being head of her father's household.

Nelly was the only one who felt unhappy about this turn of affairs. Not that she had not suffered from Peggy's authority perhaps more than all the others, for she was more sensitive; but then she reflected that "mother" would not approve of this. She even wished to make Maurice retract; but no, he said, the deed was done.

"No," said Maurice decidedly, "Peggy's had her day of trial, and she has failed. You know, even you, Nelly, are sat upon as if you were no older than Bee."

"And if we have a secret," put in Carry, feeling intensely proud of joining this family council, "we won't tell it to Peggy;" and she shook her small head in a delightfully conceited manner, which made Arthur say:

"I should like to know how long you would keep a secret, Miss Chatterbox?" All the same, the idea was taken as the only really effective way of proving that Peggy was fallen in their estimation from being head of the house.

"Yes, that will be a very good way of punishing her," said Maurice. "Peggy is awfully curious, and always wants to know everything, so we will keep our secrets to ourselves, and the first who reveals them shall be sent to Coventry."

"Only we haven't a secret," suggested Nelly dreamily. She loved to live in a world of her own, and a secret had powerful charms for her, because in the first place she so seldom had one; never when the mother had been at hand to listen to all her children's thoughts. The family conclave was broken up by nurse's appearance, and

Carry had to bring down her ideas to that state of humility necessary for walking with the little ones. It is to be feared she did not succeed very well, for nurse reported when she came in that "Miss Carry was that uppish it was time some one as could manage her better than Miss Peggy should come; little girls like Miss Carry was good for nothing but worrying the nerves of their elders."

Before tea-time all the Fenwicks assembled in the dining-room, for at this meal Busy Bee and Toddles were allowed down-stairs if their father was not at home. Peggy was late, and before her entrance Nelly remarked with a little hesitation:

"Maurice, dear, you mustn't be unkind to Peggy, now we have settled it."

"Settled what? You needn't be afraid, Nelly. Peggy sha'n't find out anything except in time; I wish she wouldn't always keep us waiting in this way."

"I say, let's begin without her," remarked Arthur, making a dash at the tea-pot; but his bold venture was stopped by the sudden driving up of a cab, and by Peggy herself rushing in.

"Here's a visitor, Nelly. Mind, you little ones, that you behave nicely; it's your new governess coming to have a look at you." This speech roused curiosity in the minds of Bee, Toddles, and Carry, but a sense of great indignation in the breast of the other three.

"Oh, I say!" remarked Maurice under his breath, for the door was opening. "You might have told us at least, it's, it's,—"

"Miss Honeybun," announced Mary, and there entered a tall somewhat stout lady, whose countenance bore such a placid kind expression that it would have been difficult to criticise her further, only Carry said to herself, "What a funny name, and what a round baby-looking face!"

Peggy was quite prepared for the occasion, and she had on her pleasantest manner as she came forward and shook hands, saying in her clear, young, decided voice:

"How do you do, Miss Honeybun? I hope you received my note. I fancied it would be nice for you to come at this time, before the children are tired. This is my brother Maurice, and Nelly is his twin (Arthur, get up and shake hands), and Carry will be your eldest pupil, and these are our two 'babies' we call them. Do sit down here and have some tea."

Peggy herself hurriedly threw off her hat and jacket, and put them on the sofa as she made the introductions, and then seated herself at the head of the table with such stately dignity that even observant Miss Honeybun was at fault and decided that Miss Fenwick was nearly seventeen; but noted too that she was wanting in neatness, and wondered "how the poor thing had managed since her mother's death." Miss Bellew had given Miss Honeybun to understand that Margaret Fenwick was a "self-willed, stuck-up little thing;" and here was she entertaining her with the air of a princess. Peggy on her side settled that after all Miss Bellew had not chosen so badly, for Miss Honeybun would do very well for the little ones, and did not look as if she

would interfere where she was not wanted. Also to herself Peggy was thinking how very unfair it was of Maurice and Nelly to expect to know everything. Of course only the eldest could enter into all the family arrangements, and it would never do to discuss plans in public, father would not like it.

After tea, during which meal Miss Honeybun observed more than she spoke, Peggy suggested that the others should all go and sit in the school-room till their father came home. Maurice took no notice of the remark, and went off to his bed-room to prepare some work, but the rest obeyed; and whilst Peggy sat down by Miss Honeybun in the drawing-room, and talked to her in a grown-up fashion, Nelly took her place in the midst of the others in a corner of the school-room, and told them one of her long quaint rambling stories. This time, however, it was founded on history, to suit the elder hearers, so that Bee and Toddles being tired, took to making patterns with their bricks on the floor, and had a grand time at make-believe soldiers and hospital patients; outdoing even sister Nelly in their power of making things appear what they were not.

When Mr. Fenwick came in at six o'clock tired and somewhat dispirited from his work-shop he was met at the hall-door by his eldest daughter, whose keen earnest face betokened that her mind was full of but one idea.

"Father, I am glad you are come, for Miss Honeybun is here. She is in the drawing-room upstairs. You know she is only going to spend

the evening with us, but if you like her she will come for good early next week. I really think she will do, she won't interfere, and, father, please don't forget to tell her that I am the head of the house, and that she will have nothing to do with me; the children are in the nursery, and Nelly with them, and Arthur and Maurice are somewhere, so you can have the drawing-room to yourselves before dinner; and please, just say that about me, I have arranged everything else." Peggy paused for want of breath, and Mr. Fenwick, with a man's dislike of talking to strangers about his own affairs, said:

"If you have arranged everything, Peggy, won't that do? Miss Bellew's letter satisfied me about the rest."

"But, indeed, father, you must just have a talk to tell her about me."

Peggy now ran lightly upstairs, feeling that men were not half so useful in the world as women, and that really when there was anything to be done they were very tiresome.

Mr. Fenwick followed her with a sigh, thinking of the gentle wife who had taken all the worries of daily life off his shoulders. He entered the drawing-room with a troubled look on his face, and Miss Honeybun at once felt sorry for him, and understood the position of the widower's family.

"You will find my children by no means perfect, Miss Honeybun," he said, after a little conversation, "but they mean well, and Peggy—" he paused; he felt he must say something about Peggy, or he should not be left in peace—"Peggy

has been our right hand during a long period of trouble, and she will try and make you comfortable. She is very unselfish in many ways. I am afraid, being so much occupied away from home, I have left a good deal to her, and so in gratitude I must not dethrone our little queen."

Miss Honeybun smiled, and understood him, for which the sculptor felt grateful.

"I am sure Miss Fenwick and I shall be good friends, and indeed I will do my duty by your children. We cannot put old heads on to young shoulders."

"And Nelly is too dreamy, I fear; she lives in a world of her own—so different to Peggy. You will try and rouse her. As to my poor Maurice, I am afraid he will never be strong enough for school-life again. His tutor comes every morning; but the boy is not quite happy at home. If only he took after me I could find him employment in my studio, but his passion is for music. I believe the organ in the opposite church is his great pleasure. I am thankful that he has this taste, as it may keep him out of mischief."

Here Peggy's footstep was heard, and Mr. Fenwick, delighted that the ordeal was over, left the room, after warmly thanking Miss Honeybun, and hoping she would decide to come to No. 13 as soon as possible. Happily for Carry, Toddles and Bee, Miss Honeybun said yes, and though she did not own it, even Peggy was glad that she had only the elders to manage.

CHAPTER IV.

"OUR REFUGEE."

SOMETHING was the matter with the others, so thought Peggy about a week after Miss Honeybun arrived. It was not that there was more open rebellion against her authority; on the contrary, Maurice had left off much of his arguing, and Arthur had been wonderfully good during these first ten days of his Easter holidays. Carry was very pert and disagreeable, but Miss Honeybun checked the outward expression of her feelings when she was present. Yet in spite of this Peggy's clear mind felt that all was not as it should be. Even Nelly, whom she had scolded as much as she liked, instead of blushing as usual, turned away as if she did not hear Peggy's voice. This was all the more aggravating, as Peggy could take hold of nothing in particular to find fault with.

"I expect this is what people call persecution," said Peggy to herself as she dressed early on the bright spring morning, "and people who do their duty must expect it, so I must not mind, though I do think it is horrid of them."

It was Saturday, and a holiday for the little

ones. Nelly and Peggy were also free of their masters for another ten days, so that not being very busy Miss Fenwick felt just a little lonely now in spite of her exalted position, and a great longing for "mother" came over her; but she was too proud to go and seek for sympathy from Nelly. No, if Nelly was horrid, and only cared about what Maurice thought and did, she would live without love and sympathy, and virtue should be its own reward. The children had now a school-room, and appeared very little down in the drawing-room, and Peggy, still afraid of injuring her dignity, would not go and play with them for fear of coming within the boundary of Miss Honeybun's authority. It certainly was rather dull to be Miss Fenwick; but having worked so hard to attain this position she must do nothing to lose it.

Easter had fallen late, and the weather was very warm in the London Square; besides, to go any distance Peggy had to walk with Miss Honeybun, Nelly, and Carry, and this was in itself a great trial, though she did her best to counteract the penance by always walking with Nelly, and keeping just far enough from the governess that passers-by might think they did not belong to her and Carry. Surely few young ladies of her age and position had so many trials. She tried to remember her mother's advice, and also to say her prayers; but these were sadly interrupted in the morning, because her duties for the day would crowd into her mind, and before she had got through the sacred words she was meditating what father would like for his dinner, and how

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tiresome schoolboys were, especially Arthur. Then Peggy, conscious that such imperfect prayers were not right, would begin again; but time failed, as she made it a rule to be punctual for her father's sake. Even these few weeks had shown Peggy that it was not easy to rule, especially with no mother to give her help and advice. This knowledge was very bitter to the high-spirited girl; but instead of making her more patient with others, it only rendered her irritable. She wanted to overcome difficulties, and fancied she could do this by her own strength of will. Miss Honeybun was perhaps the kind of person least likely to influence Margaret Fenwick, for she was not clever, and was, moreover, what Miss Bellew had truly said, a motherly person, with good sense and judgment. She had at once recognized that Peggy would brook no interference, and as she had been engaged only to look after the three younger children she conscientiously kept to her instructions. In spite of this she wanted to help Margaret, and would have liked to have shown her how to manage, and above all, how to seek the best and highest help.

But to go back to this special Saturday in the middle of the Easter holidays at No. 13 Warcote Square.

"It will be a very nice day for a walk in the Park," said Margaret at the mid-day dinner, looking towards Nelly and Miss Honeybun. "Nurse can take out the two little ones, and we may come with you, may we not?"

"I'm going to have tea with Jack Torrens," said Arthur, interrupting his sister; "father said

I might." The boy's tone was not pleasant, and Peggy at once tried to look extra dignified.

"Oh very well! I am sure we don't want you. I was talking to Nelly."

"I have a headache," said Nelly, who was inclined to be lazy about walking, "so I would rather stay in."

"I am sure a walk won't hurt you, Nelly," said Peggy decidedly, for she didn't want to walk three abreast, this was so very undignified in the park. Maurice here looked up quickly.

"Nelly ought not to walk when she has one of her headaches."

"It has nothing to do with you, Maurice," was Peggy's answer. Whereupon Maurice shrugged his shoulders, knowing that this silent mark of disapprobation was what Peggy most disliked.

"Maurice, I wish you wouldn't be so rude, you know father disapproves of your—"

"I say, Peggy, don't begin about father; you've no right to be always quoting him."

Miss Honeybun, now wishing to cast oil on the troubled waters, turned the conversation by asking Bee how she was going to spend a new shilling her father had given her that morning.

"I'se going to think a very long time first," said Bee demurely. The strife of tongues never seemed to trouble her mind; she barely noticed Peggy's sharp words, which indeed were seldom directed to the little maiden.

This scene, unimportant as it was, made Peggy decidedly cross, for she would not give up her own walk, and yet did not feel equal to forcing Nelly to come with her. It was this silent opposition

which made her say again to herself, "Something is the matter with the others." Little did she guess that the reason was that "the others" considered her to have lost her right of eldest born.

Maurice went off to his beloved organ directly after lunch, and Nelly was left alone with a poetry book, dreaming—as no one knew she dreamed except perhaps Carry—of grand things, wonderful stirring adventures and heroic deeds, in which she, quiet little Nelly, took an active part. Her energy all went in this direction; it was almost sapping the real power of doing, which in Peggy was so strong, and which in her case destroyed her imagination.

Nelly sat on by the dining-room window curled up in a big arm-chair enjoying the "The Island of the Scots" in Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*, her thin face flushed with excitement, and her eyes brightened with the enthusiasm of keen sympathy as she repeated aloud:

"Not one whose fathers had not stood
In Scotland's fields of fame.
All they had marched with Great Dundee
To where he fought and fell;
And in the deadly battle strife
Had venged their leader well.

. . . . . .

"Then went they forth to foreign lands
Like bent and broken men,
Who leave their dearest hope behind,
And may not turn again."

She was so full of these heroes, and how they crossed the Rhine wading hand in hand to attack the enemy that she did not hear the door open, nor even her own name called out by Maurice.

"Nelly! Nelly!"

"Oh, wasn't it brave of them and their Captain. I do wish I had been one of them. Think of forsaking your country for the sake of king and conscience, and—"

"Oh, I say, Nelly! what are you raving about—one of your stupid books—I do believe you fancy you're one of the people you're reading about; it's quite ridiculous." Maurice had no sympathy with this sort of imagination. If Nelly had been lost in admiration of one of Bach's fugues he could have understood it; but as for her thinking she was a knight or a patriot—it was almost a kind of mild lunacy.

By this time Nelly had come back to common earth, the island in the Rhine had disappeared, the Scottish heroes were once more where they should be, lying quietly in their graves, or to Nelly, gradually took the shape of the heavy dining-room chairs, and their Captain insensibly—as the biggest—was at last transformed to the large table where the common ordinary meals were eaten; and then Maurice, her brother, stood before her with his sallow, serious face and quick impatient glance.

"Where are all the others? Peggy hasn't come in, has she?"

"No; I don't think so. Have you had a good practice?"

"Yes, I have indeed; and fancy, Nelly, there was such a funny thing happened. When I was playing a bit out of Mozart the vestry door, which is left open, creaked, and who should come in but a young man. I didn't take any notice of him

for a long time, and he sat down and listened. I thought the vicar had sent him, or that he was one of Mr. Grant's pupils; but he wasn't, because he came up and spoke to me at last."

"Oh, Maurice! who was it?" said Nelly, at once imagining a story.

"I don't know; but I could tell at once he wasn't English, because of his accent—a German, I fancy—and he seemed to know no end about music. He said music was his one solace; rather a grand word, but perhaps that is a German way of putting it."

"I hope you were kind to him, Maurice. I daresay he is some one in disguise."

Maurice laughed.

"In disguise! No, a little shabby, perhaps. He says he lives not far off—in James Street—you know, Nelly, that pokey little street at the back of the Square. He asked if he might come and listen to me sometimes, so you'll see him if you come with me next Tuesday, perhaps."

"Had he dark eyes, a little sunken," said Nelly, thinking of one of her imaginary heroes, "and a moustache, or is it a long beard?"

"Yes, he is darkish, and a sort of German look about him; but I don't think I noticed much, except that he seemed to know a good deal about German composers. There was no mistake about that."

"Then I am sure I know what he is," said Nelly, jumping out of the arm-chair and looking eagerly at Maurice. "I do believe, Maurice, he is a political refugee. I heard father talking about them the other evening with Mr. Newtown, and

he said he knew one who had spent years in London, and that that horrid Bismarck, or somebody, wouldn't let him go back. Of course this man must be one of these poor brave men. I *shall* like to see him."

"Oh, well, perhaps he is," said Maurice, who was often, in spite of himself, influenced by Nelly's fervid imagination; "anyhow, don't tell Peggy about it. She is so fussy, and wants to know the top and bottom of everything in such a prying manner, but now she isn't eldest any longer we can have a secret to ourselves."

Nelly felt that this was indeed bliss, though her conscience made her a little uncomfortable about Peggy.

"Of course one must be very discreet about those political refugees, or else they get into so much trouble. You know I can keep a secret, don't you, Maurice?"

Nelly meant about the welfare of a refugee, but Maurice only thought of having some secret apart from Peggy, who was sure to be "awfully curious" if she got an idea of a mystery.

"Yes, you are a trump, Nelly, about not blabbing; so that's settled. I think, though, the others had better not be told yet. Arthur isn't very good at secrets, and Carry is a regular chatterbox."

"Well, perhaps not. Carry would have to be put on her honour, but she does understand honour; I told her the stories of King John of France, and—"

"Well, any donkey ought to understand being on honour, but girls are different."

"Maurice, how can you say so?" cried Nelly

indignantly. "Why, I am sure the thumb-screw or the Iron Virgin, or anything else, wouldn't make me betray any person."

Nelly was really in earnest; and looking at the slight, pale girl in her deep mourning standing up by her brother with kindling eyes, it would have been easy to believe she was of the stuff which had once made girl martyrs; but, was her discretion equal to her enthusiasm? Maurice, more matter of fact, was not to be persuaded by her energetic words.

"Well, I don't know, Nelly. I daresay you would *mean* to, but the thumb-screw can't be over pleasant, I fancy; anyhow, here's a test for you before it goes as far as thumb-screws, mind you don't let out that we have a secret."

"Of course not; but, Maurice, did you ask the name of our refugee?"

Nelly had quite settled that this stranger was what she fancied him to be.

"No, I didn't ask; but he told me it was Wolfgang König—rather a mouthful."

"No, I don't think so, it's just the name for a hero, and then König shows that he is of a loyal mind like these brave Scotch soldiers; Maurice, do listen:

> The Rhine is running deep and red,
> The island lies before,
> Now is there one of all the host
> Will dare to venture o'er?
> For not alone—"

"Oh! I say, Nelly, shut up! Here's Peggy and the Honeybun coming in; they'll think you've gone stark mad."

In a minute Nelly drew herself into her shell, and before the party had entered she was once more the quiet, shy Nelly whom Miss Honeybun considered it kinder to leave alone, and whom Peggy, although she was her sister, never understood, or indeed never beheld in these blissful moments.

Peggy's entrance was like a cold wind blowing through an invalid's room. She was so strong, so ready for action, so unpoetically energetic, so everything different to poor Nelly and musical Maurice.

"I am sure, Nelly, your headache would have been ever so much better if you'd been for the walk we've had, instead of staying moping over those stupid poetry books. I know mother used to tell you so; do go and get ready for tea. Father is coming in early, and he likes to see us neat, and perhaps a gentleman is coming with him."

Nelly blushed crimson, but went upstairs without a word.

CHAPTER V.

AMONG THE STATUES.

SUNDAY had always been made a bright, happy day to the Fenwicks when their mother had been alive and able to attend to them; there was the Sunday lesson at ten o'clock, to which all came, even Toddles and Bee saying a short verse, or a little portion of the catechism, and some lines of a hymn; then the going to church in several detachments; the family dinner after it; and in the afternoon a walk with father by turns, or a visit to his workshop to see what he had done during the week. Mrs. Fenwick had always gone to her husband's studio on Sundays as long as she was able, and she would show her children some of the beauties of their father's work. Often, too, she would point out how it was patient labour that brought beauty to perfection, and that through much chipping only could perfect form be arrived at. Some of these practical lessons had sunk deeply into the minds of her children, but many of them had been forgotten, only Nelly assimilated these past remarks with her queer fanciful stories, which now and then had the opposite effect to what she intended, for Toddles and

Bee retained strange ideas about the great figures of knights and soldiers in the spacious room and along the corridor in father's shop, and had dim ideas that when they were quite alone these figures moved out of their places and fought battles or performed other wonderful feats till morning, when they calmed down and replaced themselves. It was certainly Nelly's fault, though she never dreamt that the children's minds were so busy, and that instead of understanding her allegories they put private interpretations of their own on the big men's doings.

This Sunday proved a very wet day, so the younger children did not go to church in the morning, and in the afternoon Mr. Fenwick proposed that the whole party should come to the studio and show off its treasures to Miss Honeybun. There was a general acclamation of pleasure, only broken in upon by Peggy, who remarked:

"I am sure Nelly ought to stay in to-day. She was too ill to come for a walk with me yesterday."

"I wasn't ill," said Nelly, blushing as was her wont, for she was much afraid of her grave, somewhat stern, father; "it was only a headache."

"Nelly is getting so lazy, it's all because of those stupid story-books, I know. I wish there were no such things as story-books in the world; such rubbish as they are!"

"Nelly's stories isn't rubbish," put in Toddles, "just real beautiful true stories, all about—"

"Do be quiet, Toddles," said Nelly quickly; she did not want her secrets let out in public.

Mr. Fenwick always kept the key of his studio

in his study at No. 13; this was quite a small room near the dining-room, and the name study had been given it by courtesy, though it was chiefly used for smoking and the writing of business letters. The key was placed in the little drawer of a cabinet, the studio being shut up when the men went away on Saturday and the key left at Mr. Fenwick's private house. It was Peggy's privilege to fetch this key out of its drawer before starting on Sunday, and though it had not been said in so many words, yet it was generally understood by the household that no one but Peggy ever touched it.

To-day they all gathered in the upper room before described, and Miss Honeybun was initiated into the mysteries of casts and bronzes, designs and other things, which the young Fenwicks all knew as by intuition.

"Miss Honeybun," began Toddles, all impatience to be showman, "please look here, this is a little Venus, there's a big one down-stairs, she's the pretty lady, you know; and do look at this man throwing stones, he's got no clothes on because he's a Greek. I should like to be a Greek, wouldn't you, Miss Honeybun, when it's hot? And this is my head when I was a baby, isn't I nice and fat? And Bee is somewhere. Father, where's Bee? Oh! and there's a lot of things more. Father, may Bee and I go down-stairs and see how many more holes Mr. Smith's got in his face?"

Mr. Smith had been a benefactor of some northern town, and being dead, his townsfolk were going to place his stone statue on a pedestal in one of their squares, and had commissioned

Mr. Fenwick to represent him. Toddles took great interest in Mr. Smith, because he liked to inspect his clothes, which, being unlike Greek garments, or other fanciful accoutrements, spoke more to the little boy's practical mind. He and Bee gloated lovingly over Mr. Smith's waistcoat buttons and his watch pocket.

"Pray retire, sir," said Mr. Fenwick laughing, he was always rather anxious as to what Toddles might say next, "and Nelly, go with the children, as I don't like them to be alone down there. Now, Miss Honeybun, may I show you this book of designs, it exhibits the growth of art from the earliest known specimens; I wish my children took after me, but I see no signs of it in any of them but that young Toddles, who is always happy among the figures."

"It's a very good thing I don't wish to draw all day," remarked Peggy, "I am sure I don't know how we should get on."

"Why, much better," muttered Maurice under his breath, happily for him not loud enough for his father to hear. In one corner of this room stood a book-shelf, and taking one of the books Maurice said he was going down-stairs to the others. Arthur hovered about near his father looking over the designs, but Peggy took this opportunity to sound her father about a new plan she had in her head.

"Don't you think, father, it would be a very good thing for Nelly to go to the High School for her lessons now? You know I really can't do all the preparation that Miss Carey expects of me, and if I go on with my music that must be

enough; self-education is worth much more than cramming at my age. Now, if Nelly went to Condor Street after the holidays it would leave me free to see after household matters. No one knows all the little things that have to be seen to, and Arthur's clothes must be all looked over, and—and—"

"I shall be so glad to help you," said Miss Honeybun quietly, but Peggy was on her guard at once.

"Oh! thank you, I know you would, but what with the three children's lessons and seeing after them, I am sure you have no time for anything else; and mother always let me manage and trusted me with everything, so that I can do it all with time. I only meant that it is a pity for Miss Carey to come for Nelly alone; besides, Nelly is getting so fanciful that it will do her good to be stirred up at the High School."

Mr. Fenwick's sad look came back again, he always felt so powerless to settle about Peggy's plans. On the face of them they were excellent, and all she had said was true, but he had always left these educational arrangements to his wife, and the knowledge of his new responsibilities weighed upon him. However, Mrs. Fenwick had always trusted Peggy, why should he not do so also? Still he demurred.

"I do not much like school-life for Nelly, she is not equal to roughing it or to much hard work."

"Oh! it won't be hard work. Alice Renshaw goes to Condor Street High School and she is much more delicate than Nelly; and besides, she

told me one must sign a paper and say how long girls may work at home. If Nelly ever cared to help me it would be much better for her, but the only thing she likes is telling a lot of stupid stories to Bee and Toddles. I am sure it is very bad for them, they get such very queer ideas."

This finding fault jarred on Mr. Fenwick, but he did not like to check Peggy before Miss Honeybun, so he said:

"Perhaps it could be arranged for Nelly to walk with Miss Renshaw and her maid, she passes our house, I think."

"Yes, I had thought of that; indeed I asked Alice Renshaw if she would mind, and she said she would be delighted. Shall I write a note to the head mistress in Condor Street, father?"

"Yes, if that is the right thing to do; but, Peggy, you must consider if this is fair to Miss Carey."

"Oh yes, of course. You know, father, she has not been to us since mother's illness, and I told her when I met her last week it was very uncertain if we should have lessons again, and she said it did not matter."

"You seem to have settled a good deal without me, Peggy," said her father, smiling a little, and then dismissing the subject from his thoughts he gave himself up to the more congenial employment of tracing out the progressive course of art for Miss Honeybun's satisfaction. As it was all very new to her, she rather lost herself in trying to see the vast difference between Assyrian and Egyptian ornamentation, and had to take on trust all Mr. Fenwick said about the tendency of art to degenerate when nations became over-

civilized. However, she was a good listener, and the sculptor did not know she now and then lost the thread of his discourse because she was wondering how Peggy was going to win the love of her brothers and sisters, and she herself had long ago found out that government without love can never be anything but a failure.

Down-stairs, in the great hall, there was a very happy party gathered together, seated on a large block of stone, as yet unhewn, and whilst waiting to become beautiful contenting itself with being useful.

Toddles, having finished inspecting Mr. Smith's waistcoat-buttons, now came to sit by Nelly, full of anxiety about a new figure he had discovered.

Every figure in father's workshop had to be introduced to Toddles and Bee by a story from Nelly, otherwise there was something quite wrong in the sculpture if Nelly had nothing to tell about it.

"Nelly, tell Bee and me a story about that lady." "That lady" was at present only a clay figure. It represented a very beautiful young girl draped in a long white tunic girdled at the waist. She was stooping, and also kneeling on one knee. In her hand she held a lamp slightly swinging by three short chains, but her countenance denoted intense attention and reverence as she gazed at a low hearth where fire was represented by logs of wood half consumed.

"What's her name?" said Bee, keeping to her formula.

"That is meant for a vestal virgin," said Nelly "I heard father explain it the other day, and—"

"Never mind, father," said Toddles quickly. "Begin with 'Once upon a time,' Nelly. You always do, you know." Maurice here appeared, but as Nelly was not to be let off, she continued, trying to keep nearer the truth than she usually did:

"Once upon a time a man called Æneas fled away from Troy (Toddles nodded he knew all about Troy), and brought with him some sacred fire. He did not think it was just like common fire, but he fancied it was the most beautiful and wonderful thing imaginable, and he called it, or some of his descendants called it, Vesta, and made it a goddess. After a time the Romans built Vesta a beautiful temple at Rome, and they made it a round roof, and in the middle of it they put what they thought would represent Vesta, and that was a fire on a hearth. She herself was so wise and good that they did not make any likeness of her, but they collected beautiful young Roman girls and told them to live here always and to watch Vesta's fire. Night and day it was always burning, and these young girls prayed to Vesta several times a day."

"How ever do you remember all that mythology?" said Maurice, who was often astonished at Nelly's odd knowledge, but Toddles thought it all very natural.

"But, Nelly, suppose one of them let the fire out, what did people say?"

"That was a most dreadful misfortune, and they were terribly punished for it."

"I expect they were whipped," said the boy, thoughtfully evolving the ancient Roman laws by his own past experience of carelessness.

"Might they touch the match-box?" asked Bee, who had lately got into trouble in this way.

"Of course not. Why, there were no matches then, Bee. I think father said if the fire was ever let out some old man came and rubbed two pieces of wood together."

Toddles stored up this information in his mind for future use, and the conversation was interrupted by the sound of voices, as the rest of the family came down into the big hall. Peggy at once went up to Nelly in her usual brisk, important manner.

"Oh Nelly! you ought not to let the children sit on this cold stone. How careless of you!"

"I don't think it will hurt them, dear," said Miss Honeybun; "see, it is quite dry."

"Well, Toddles," said his father, "have you seen my new lady?"

"Yes. I know all about her. She was just like Mary Anne, and had to see after the fires," said the youngster, delighted at finding a good simile. "Father, do show Miss Honeybun the poor blind poet."

Nelly had risen and stood shy and silently by whilst her father went round with the governess. Peggy was so full of her new plans that she was obliged to bring them out at once.

"Nelly, father says you are to go to Condor Street High School when the holidays are over, and I shall only go on with Mr. Hart, and perhaps go to the history classes. I have so much to do." Nelly was taken by surprise.

"Oh Peggy! I can't bear the High School. I

am sure I shall not like all those girls. Why did father say I should—"

"Please, Nelly, don't make a fuss about it. Don't you see that I can't go on with Miss Carey, and I do think you needn't consider so much about what you like when we are all trying to make things easy for poor father." Nelly did make an effort, though she thought it hard that Peggy should call her selfish. Certainly she was not always fussing about after household matters, but then—yes, it was all Peggy's unkindness; and though Nelly said no more even to herself, the sore, hurt feeling remained, and made her find refuge still more in her day-dreams and her imaginative stories. She could not see that life is very real as well as very full of mystery, and that neither of these facts should be forgotten nor should they thrust each other aside. She walked home by Maurice's side. These twins, though very unlike, had yet that curious sympathy of thought which is often found in this close relationship.

"Maurice, don't forget I am to go with you the next afternoon you practise. I wonder if *he* will come."

"He! Who?" asked Maurice.

"Why, the political refugee, of course—Wolfgang König."

"But perhaps he isn't one. How you do jump at conclusions, Nelly!"

"Oh! but I am sure he must be. You'll see, Maurice, if I am not right."

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE ORGAN-CHAMBER.

THERE was a great discussion the next day at No. 13, because Tuesday was Peggy's birthday. Now a birth-day among the Fenwicks had always been considered as a very special festival, and there was always a great consultation about presents. In the school-room, after breakfast, all the children assembled, knowing Peggy was well out of the way down-stairs with cook. Maurice so far forgot his resentment as to join in the discussion, and Miss Honeybun proved a very useful confidant.

"The moss has come," cried Carry, "and I have put it into my foot-pan to get well soaked before we make it into a wreath. Father has ordered white flowers this time, but I don't think Peggy is at all like a white flower, do you, Nelly?"

"I wish we had just a crown of laurel leaves instead of that very wet moss," said Nelly; "the Greeks had only bay and laurel."

A chorus of groans greeted this remark.

"Oh, Nelly! why, half the fun would be gone if we didn't make the birth-day wreath," cried Carry. "I shouldn't like just a few dusty laurel leaves on my birth-day."

"Well, I do hope your moss will be wrung rather drier than usual, Carry," said Maurice, "because Nelly caught a dreadful cold having to wear your drippy thing last time."

"They last so much longer well wetted," said Carry; "but I can't think what to give Peggy. She doesn't care about little things, and I've only half-a-crown left."

"I've got one shilling," said Bee. "I think Peggy would like some new pens, she's always so busy writing important letters she says."

"A book," suggested Miss Honeybun; but everyone knew Peggy hated books. At last, after various remarks, the presents were settled upon, and Miss Honeybun was requested to take the children to the right shop. The afternoon was spent in choosing the gifts, and in the evening Carry and Arthur retired to the school-room, where the foot-pan, full of soaked moss, was brought, and the white camellias cunningly worked in. When done it was a truly beautiful thick moss ring, with white stars, but it had to be placed in an empty basin, as it would drip and make little pools on the carpet.

"It will be all right to-morrow," said Carry comfortingly when Nelly and Maurice inspected it; and Toddles and Bee were quite excited at the thought of being the bearers of it the next day.

Peggy's birth-day was bright and sunny, and when prayers were over it was a very happy moment for the sixteen-year-old young lady to find her plate heaped up with parcels of various shapes and sizes and to receive the good wishes of the family. She herself was more elated at

having reached the happy sixteen completed years than with the "Very many happy returns of the day, dear child," which her father bestowed upon her. Sixteen was of course the same as seventeen. She was entering that number, and could with truth say she was in her seventeenth. Then all at once came the patter of little feet, and four plump hands carried the wreath.

"Happy returns, happy returns, sister Peggy, and here's your wreath," said Toddles.

"Please stoop your head, Peggy. It's quite left off dripping, Carry says," added Bee.

"Oh! you are beautiful," said Toddles; "and my present is in that big round parcel, Peggy, and it's—"

"Hush! Let Peggy undo them herself."

It was a pretty scene; and had Peggy been thinking less of herself she might have had time to rejoice over the brotherly and sisterly love now exhibited. She even damped Toddles' ardour by telling him to make haste with his breakfast, and by insisting on helping everybody before she would undo the various white paper bundles. After performing her duties she proceeded leisurely to her pleasures, though of course a girl in her seventeenth year must not show undue anxiety. When the presents had been fully admired Mr. Fenwick fetched a small box which had been lying on the writing-table.

"Here, Peggy, is my present to you, and though it may not be of much use to you yet, I know you will value it for your dear mother's sake. I gave her these on our wedding-day." Mr. Fenwick opened a flat jewel-case, where, on the old white

velvet, reposed a string of pearls attached by a beautiful gold clasp. The pearls were large and valuable.

"Mother's pearls!" exclaimed Peggy. "I do like them very much."

"You know their history—they belonged to my mother, and were given to her by a Russian merchant whose son my father saved from drowning. You must put them away carefully, Peggy, and wear them occasionally."

The box was soon passed round, and Nelly especially admired them, not for their value, but because she associated pearls with the stories out of the *Arabian Nights;* she could fancy genii bringing them to their masters on platters of gold, or some poor traveller coming upon sacks of them in a hidden cave. She at once began weaving a story to tell to Bee and Toddles next time the request for one came.

"Now, Peggy, choose your treat," said Mr. Fenwick. "I must be off in a minute. I have received a letter to-day asking me in a very flattering manner to undertake the sculpture for one of our public monuments; I must send in some designs as soon as possible. What would you like, Madam Tussaud's?"

But Peggy scorned this.

"No, I should like to go to the Crystal Palace; may we, father?"

"Certainly—Miss Honeybun shall take you; and here is ten shillings for you to spend."

"I would rather go with Maurice when he practises the organ," said Nelly shyly. She was afraid of what Peggy might say.

"Settle it as you like," said her father rising; his mind was already deep in designs, but Nelly was much rebuked by her elder sister.

"Nelly, that is just like you—too lazy even to care about a treat. Well, I shall ask Alice Renshaw to come with us."

Nelly did not mind so that she might have her own way, and did not give herself time to listen to Miss Honeybun's mild reproach.

"Isn't it a pity, Nelly, not to come with your sister on her birth-day?"

"We never care about the same things," she said in excuse, though all the while she knew this was not her real reason.

Thus it happened that Nelly got her wish, and was all happiness when she walked across the Square with her brother on the way to his beloved organ.

St. Wilfrid's church was large and not very attractive, but it contained a beautiful organ which had a small chamber of its own and occupied all one little transept. This had its separate door, and the vicar had allowed Maurice Fenwick to have a key; he appreciated his talent, and felt sorry for him, as his own boy was a perfect Hercules, and could row and play cricket to perfection. Maurice had once said to Mr. Roy the vicar:

"I wish I could be like other boys—I can do nothing but just play; and that seems a poor sort of a vocation."

"I don't agree with you, Maurice," was the answer. "Any work perfected and done with all the strength God has given to us raises a man

above mere healthy and able-bodied creatures who never use their minds. To develop strength is only one side of our duties, but to develop the intellect is far nobler."

"Do you think I could become somebody—that I could make a name with my music?" Maurice asked with a new hope.

"Why not? is not eternity granted to musicians? for surely we shall not lose the music of Beethoven, Mozart, and others, when we get to heaven."

It was after this conversation that Maurice had taken heart; and though it did not cure the feeling of discontent, it lessened it a good deal. Very constantly the boy might be found in the organ-chamber of St. Wilfrid's, and sometimes as a great treat he allowed Nelly to come with him, as was the case to-day. Nothing delighted the girl so much as to sit in an old chair, with her elbows on her knees and her head resting on the palms of her hands, lost in a musical dream, which, beginning with Maurice and a funeral march, wandered on into all sorts of fancies. In five minutes Maurice had forgotten her, and she forgot she was in the organ-chamber.

To-day, however, she had come hoping to see the stranger, but she soon forgot him and everything else around her till she heard these words in Maurice's voice:

"Good afternoon!"

"I heard the divine music," said the man spoken to, "and I felt I must come and listen again; that is a splendid thing, and you play it to perfection, but you should hear it at Dresden."

THE MEETING IN ST. WILFRID'S CHURCH. PAGE 66.

Nelly had all her wits about her now, and she saw before her a young man about twenty-four years old; his clothes were a little shabby, but they had been once of a fashionable cut; his face was pale and thin, his eyes dark and sunk deep in his head, his mouth was not very pleasant-looking; so Nelly did not waste her attention upon it.

She listened to their talk about music for some time, and then gradually becoming interested in Wolfgang König, she got up from her chair and came nearer to them.

"This is my sister," said Maurice; he was much flattered at his playing having been so praised, and that by one who appeared to know a good deal on the subject.

"And do you too play, miss?" asked the German.

"No, not much—I mean not like my brother—but I am very fond of it."

"Music is a fine thing—a beautiful mistress, but she is not a good housekeeper," said König with a sigh. "I have tried her, and found her wanting in that capacity."

Maurice laughed.

"You mean it doesn't pay; can't you find employment?"

"I am still looking," said the young man lifting up his eyes. "I do not despair; I will trust the muse."

Nelly thought this a beautiful sentiment, and again, full of her idea, she said a little shyly:

"It must be very difficult for you to find work, I know; you are a political refugee — are not

you? My father said that Bismarck is very hard on those people who have suffered for their opinions."

"Yes, miss," said the German, his dark eyes all at once appearing to flash out a little smile of amusement, which was lost upon Nelly. "Yes, miss, you divine rightly, a political refugee—a good name—an idea."

"It can't be an idea to you, though," said Nelly earnestly. "It must be horrid, dreadful to have to live in smoky London instead of in your Black Forest or perhaps in the Hartz Mountains. I have read how beautiful those places are."

"Thank you, miss; it is not often one finds a feeling heart like yours and mister, your brother —if there were more like you there would be fewer political refugees."

Another smile, which really lit up König's face. Maurice, not having so much sympathy as Nelly for a refugee, and much more than she had for a musician, here broke in:

"Have you heard Mr. Stanford play? It is worth walking miles to listen to him."

"Yes, I have heard of his fame, but those great men will have nothing to do with poor people who are, as mees said, political refugees."

"Father says," put in Nelly, her colour coming with her earnestness, "that it is very difficult for the poor to get a hearing, however clever and good they may be; whilst the rich have only to ask for an introduction, and everyone gives it to them."

"That is very true, very true," said Wolfgang König, shaking his head; "perhaps, however,

some day my chance will come—I must wait patiently."

Maurice now began to wish his new acquaintance to move off, as he desired to go on with his practice; so he said:

"If it would be of any use to you I know one or two musicians, and they might help you if you want work."

"Yes, I'm sure we would do all we could," added Nelly, who, as is often the case with shy people, now and then exhibited a boldness quite alarming.

"Thank you, thank you! You are kind, very kind. In London it is difficult to find help. If I might come again some day and listen to your playing, sir; and then perhaps your father whom you mentioned would help me with a letter, or you might yourself write a little word for me."

"Oh! Stanford, the swell musician, is a friend of ours," said Maurice grandly, "and he and I are great chums."

"Then there's Mr. Symonds, Maurice—isn't he in the Foreign Office or somewhere? perhaps he could influence Bismarck," added Nelly.

After more thanks, bows, and compliments, Mr. Wolfgang König retired; and Maurice, dismissing all thoughts of him, plunged into a fugue. Not so Nelly, however; she began weaving such a tale of woe and misery, with Wolfgang as a central figure, that she was quite startled when Maurice jumped up, shut the instrument, and fetched out the young blower from a back region of the organ.

"She's been a well blow'd to-day, sir," said the

youngster, grinning; "such a work as it is, to be sure, to keep the lead from bobbing out of sight. I don't know which is the most worked out—me or the organ."

Maurice gave him an extra fee, wondering why London boys were so sharp.

"Come, Nelly, wake up, can't you! wherever are you, I should like to know?"

"Oh, Maurice! his mother is dying; and he begged and prayed to be allowed to go back, but the law was inexorable."

Maurice fairly laughed; he was so much accustomed to Nelly's vagaries that she was not afraid of betraying herself to him.

"I daresay it's nothing of the sort with the real hero; however, it is a shame such clever fellows can't get work just because they are exiled."

"But I was right, wasn't I, Maurice—he *is* a refugee? And please don't tell Peggy; she will say we ought not to speak to strangers. She never can sympathize with misfortune."

"Besides, we don't mean to tell her anything now—she's lost her privileges."

"And you will do something, won't you, for him, dear old Maurice? it's our secret, isn't it?"

When the party came home from the Crystal Palace with wonderful tales of all they had seen and done, Nelly heard with her outward ears, but her mind did not take it in. What was a bicycle race compared with a live hero, a man of misfortune! and what could there be in the playing of fountains to entrance the imagination as

did an exile banished by the wicked German chancellor!

"Nelly, you did miss such delightful, jolly, beautiful things," cried Carry; "how you could prefer to sit by that stupid organ I can't think."

"Don't use slang words," said Peggy sternly. "Miss Honeybun, please scold Carry when she says 'jolly.'"

"I heard you say a 'jolly lot' the other day," answered Carry, not daunted; and this time she had to be scolded in good earnest; whilst Peggy, very cross at the reproof from her younger sister, revenged herself by finding fault with Nelly, who comforted herself by thinking:

"At all events Peggy doesn't know our secret."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAMILY FRIEND.

A FEW mornings after Peggy's birth-day that young lady's face expressed terrible consternation as she opened a letter at breakfast-time. Mr. Fenwick had lately become so much engrossed with his new designs that at home he was very absent and silent. Indeed, as Peggy had not made any special complaints or new plans since the Sunday, he had begun to think that his household affairs would now go on like well-ordered machinery. There was kind, sensible Miss Honeybun to overlook the youngsters, and be a check on nurse; and Peggy had seen to the bodily wants of everyone in really a marvellous manner. She certainly had a genius for housekeeping, and the weekly books were a pleasure to behold. Maurice was, of course, the puzzle. Still he was learning with a tutor in the mornings, and time alone could settle what profession he must follow. Quiet, dreamy Nelly was never any trouble; Arthur would soon be back at school; and precocious Miss Carry was at present well under control. Having mentally reviewed his household, and congratulated himself that everything was as well

as it could be without the motherly influence, Mr. Fenwick, as we have said, tried to forget sorrow by arduous labour, and was glad to feel that he had done right in trusting his energetic eldest-born. Some intimate friend had hinted that he must some day marry again, but Mr. Fenwick had rejected the idea with anger. He could never replace his darling; and besides, apart from himself, what terrible scenes there would be between Miss Fenwick and a stepmother.

However, this morning he was calculating a problem of proportion when Peggy's exclamation roused him.

"Father, whatever do you think she says?"

"She—who, my dear?"

"The cat's mother," whispered Carry, loud enough to make Arthur burst out laughing.

"Why, Miss Bellew, of course, father. How very, very tiresome family friends are!"

"Well, what is it? You forget, Peggy, that she was your mother's oldest and—"

"Yes, I know; but it does seem rather hard we should have to adopt people's oldest—I mean, of course, she isn't *my* oldest friend." This comical idea—though Peggy was not laughing at all—raised a smile on Mr. Fenwick's face. He was a little afraid of Miss Bellew himself, but he would not betray this feeling.

"I know of no better, more kind-hearted, or more excellent woman than Miss Bellew; but what does she say?"

"Why, she invites herself to come and stay here next Monday for a few days; wishing to see how we all are, and feeling sure that such an old

friend—" Peggy broke off in disgust. "I know what it is," she added; "she wants to spy on me and see how many things I don't do right. I am sure I shall never write and invite myself to other people's houses, however old and disagreeable I become."

"Peggy!" There was a shade of reproof in her father's voice which only added to Peggy's injury.

"I think she's rather a jolly old girl," said Arthur, while Maurice gave him a kick under the table.

"Nobody asked for your opinion, Arthur. Father, may I say that we don't receive company yet?" said Peggy decidedly.

"Certainly not. Miss Bellew is always to be made welcome to my house, Peggy; and remember she nursed your mother through a very dangerous illness. She is a most devoted woman, and you ought to be grateful for the interest she takes in you." Peggy's face was not to be described as "sunny" at this minute; and Nelly, wakening up to the misfortune, suggested the only comfort she could find.

"Never mind, Peggy; it won't be for very long."

"How stupid you are, Nelly!" was the quick answer. "It's all very well for you to say that. You'll have begun the classes; and, besides, the entertaining won't trouble you very much. You'll take a book and sit in a corner of the room, and leave me to do company." There was so much truth in this that the dart pierced Nelly's conscience, but conscience does not always take kindly to such reproofs. Nelly coloured up and said

something bitter against her sister to herself, little guessing that Peggy felt sorry directly after saying the unkind words.

Mr. Fenwick rose soon after to go off to the studio, and Peggy, who was pertinacity itself, said once more:

"Father, must I say yes?"

"Of course. Peggy, pray don't ask again." Then, turning to the governess, he said: "Do you think, Miss Honeybun, it would hurt Bee to come and sit in the studio for an hour every day. Nurse could bring her. I want a child's face as model; and ah! Peggy, I forgot I shall not be home for luncheon. I shall have to attend a meeting about the hanging of the Academy pictures." Peggy didn't answer, and allowed her father to go away without a smile. Little did she guess how grieved he was to have to appear in the light of an unkind judge; but he wished to make all allowance for her, and only sighed as he thought of the dear face which had always kept a bright look ready for him whenever he came in or went out.

This morning's episode had so entirely upset Peggy's temper that everything went wrong that day. Nobody was right, and hasty words were plentiful, yet all the time Peggy was blaming herself, and thinking how horrid she was; but the supreme effort of "getting over it" was not made, and so the home-music was put out of tune, the temper of the head seemed to call forth the worst faults of all the others. Nelly, injured in her feelings, took refuge in a book and never offered any help to her sister. Carry, encouraged by the silence of her elders, was more pert than

usual, till Miss Honeybun's gentle rebuke recalled her to a better mind; and Toddles and Bee were rather troublesome, because sister Nelly refused them a story in their play-time. That day all the sweet bells of childhood jangled discordantly, and the original cause was Peggy's dislike of the family friend.

It was therefore as no welcome guest that Miss Bellew stepped out of her carriage on the day appointed at No. 13. Happily Mr. Fenwick had made a point of coming home to receive her, and so Peggy's cold greeting was not much noticed; but in the evening all the party collected in the drawing-room, and then began Peggy's misery, for her father was out, and Miss Honeybun was upstairs.

"Well, my dears, so you manage pretty well, do you? I daresay Miss Honeybun is a great comfort to your father. I knew she would be; she is a thoroughly motherly person, and will do her duty. Not a mere stuck-up governess who gives herself airs, such as I see so often in some that I meet."

"She is a very nice person for the little ones," said Peggy grandly. Nelly, Maurice, Arthur, and Carry were all within hearing, and she must maintain her authority.

"Humph!" said Miss Bellew. She was short-sighted, and had a way of not looking up from her work when she spoke, so that freezing glances were lost upon her.

"And so you are going to a High-School, Nelly? I don't approve of those new-fangled notions at all. When I was young we did our lessons with

our mothers, or our elders, quietly at home; and, for my part, I think we were much better informed people than any of you will ever be, my dears."

"I am sure I don't want to go," said Nelly suddenly, taking her revenge, and Peggy fired up.

"Nelly is so lazy at home! I am sure it is the best thing for her. I can't go on with my lessons, however much I wish it. There is everything in the house to see to."

"But, my dear, Miss Honeybun would do all that with the greatest ease. She is used to seeing after a much larger establishment than this. If you want to do your lessons a little longer—which is a very good thing for girls—it would be a much better plan. I must speak to your father about it." This was almost too much for Peggy to bear.

"I do not wish anyone to take the place mother thought me fitted for," she said, trying to keep calm, though she found it difficult. Nelly foresaw a storm, and trembled, but Peggy had alienated her gentle sister, and Nelly would not stand up for her.

"Humph!" said Miss Bellew; "I am afraid she made a great mistake then, poor thing. I must speak my mind, Margaret, for her sake as well as for yours." Peggy's anger now bubbled over. She could control it no longer.

"I do think it is very unjust—very, very." Afraid of what she might say herself, Peggy flung down her work and rushed away, whilst a terrible pause followed her exit, till Miss Bellew said quietly:

"Ah! poor thing! Easily upset, I am afraid." Then, turning to Nelly, she added:

"And so you are one of the dreamers of the earth, Eleanor? There's nothing so dangerous as dreaming. I feel it my duty to warn you, because one of the saddest things I have come across was caused by the carelessness of a dreamy, self-centred girl. I am sure Margaret does not set you that example." Nelly's champion was, however, at hand.

"I can't bear girls that are always fussing about nothing," said Maurice. Happily for the peace of the evening, Arthur here broke in. Strange to say, the schoolboy had rather a liking for the family friend, and took all her remarks in good part.

"I say, Miss Bellew, didn't you wish you were a boy when you were young? Girls are such duffers! Carry screams if she sees a mouse. I don't expect you did, though."

"A mouse! Why should one scream at seeing a mouse? I am afraid Carry is a foolish little girl."

"Oh! Carry isn't really afraid," said Arthur patronizingly; "only girls do like squealing about nothing."

"Ah! is that your opinion of women?" said Miss Bellew, smiling in a comical manner. "I remember that once I squealed about nothing, as you express it. I was staying in a country-house—" The very idea of a story made the young people draw closer to Miss Bellew. Telling a story always creates sympathy towards even the most unlikely people. "I was at one end of a

wing of the building, the part where visitors are frequently put in country-houses, and the place looked decidedly desolate and queer;—not that I am nervous; and as to being afraid of the dark, such a thing never entered my head. However, when I went to bed I remember peeping out of my window and seeing it looked out upon a court-yard and the kitchen premises, and that trees were growing much too close to the house. I made up my mind before getting into bed that I would tell my host the next day that he had better cut them down, as it made the house damp. You know I always speak my mind. After I had been asleep some time I woke up quite suddenly, and in a moment I felt sure that behind the heavy curtain in front of my window some one was trying to tamper with the fastening.

"Oh!" said Carry, opening her eyes wide; and Nelly said: "A ghost!" Arthur murmured: "A robber!"

"You are all wrong. I thought it was a robber, because I knew it wasn't a ghost. If there are such things they never appear to matter-of-fact people like myself. No, it's a robber, I said, and I mean to outwit him; so I lay quietly till the window part of the affair was over, and then the curtain moved, and there was a soft thud as the intruder jumped down from the sill. It was pitch dark, so I could only hear—not see; but I listened to the footsteps stealing across the large chamber, and then round my bed, for the door was very near the bed. Wait a minute, I thought, and as soon as you open my door I'll frighten you. It took him some time to walk

gently round to the door, and now came my opportunity. The intruder's hand was on the handle. He let something fall, and amidst the noise I jumped out of bed and clutched in the darkness. It was then I squealed, my dears, because I expected to seize a good-sized man's arm; and instead of that my fingers clutched a mop of shaggy hair, and a youthful voice shrieked for mercy.

"'It's only me, Miss Bellew—Pat Cormick, and I've been out catching moths, and yours is the only window I can undo.' And so it was. This wretched schoolboy, who was staying in the house, had a passion for moth-hunting, and chose to use my room as a passage. I don't think I forgave him for a long time. He deprived me of telling the only brave thing I ever did, because, of course, the end of the story is too ridiculous, and only fit for children. Ah! here's Miss Honeybun; but remember, Arthur, that if girls scream, schoolboys are very tiresome creatures, and cultivate inconvenient amusements."

When bed-time came Nelly crept upstairs to her sister's room, and found her sitting by her window doing some sewing, and still looking indignant.

"Oh, Peggy! I wish you hadn't gone. She really wasn't so bad after all, and—"

"Do go away, Nelly. It's no use your saying anything. Miss Bellew is a horrid, interfering, meddling old thing, and I wish she were gone away." And Nelly retreated in haste.

CHAPTER VIII.

TODDLES.

"TAKE my advice, Mr. Fenwick," said Miss Bellew as she was preparing to say good-bye to Mr. Fenwick. "Take my advice, and just put that good Honeybun over every one of your children; if you leave so much responsibility to that headstrong girl of yours, you'll be sorry for it. Oh, I know you won't take my advice, so I am only wasting my breath, which I can't afford to do at my age, so good-bye; at all events the little ones will come to no harm if that motherly person is allowed her own way."

After this final speech the family friend departed, and Peggy heaved a sigh of relief whilst Mr. Fenwick said to himself:

"No, no; that would be impossible; Peggy wouldn't bear to be under anyone now." Then he dismissed the subject and went off to his studio. Arthur was going back to school the next day, and Peggy and nurse were overlooking his wardrobe to see that every necessary repair had been made. Certainly in many ways Peggy was admirable; she felt this so strongly herself that she

would have been quite pained had she heard nurse remark to Miss Honeybun:

"I believe Miss Peggy thinks the world would stand still on one leg if she was to leave off watching it walk; but there, ma'am, she's one of those hot sort of people, very much like Mount Vesuvius as is in Miss Bee's picture-books, if it don't have a blow-up now and then it's not happy in its inside. Not but what she is worth two of Miss Nelly with her sleepy ways; she goes about as if life was a feather-bed or soft pillow for her to dream on. I'm dreadful afraid some day as she'll be startled up from her sleep, and have to rub her eyes a good deal. If those two could be rolled out together and made up again it would be a deal better for the household."

Miss Honeybun smiled at these plain words, and secretly wished she could be of more use to both girls, but being a wise woman she bided her time. When the novelty of being head has worn off Peggy will be glad enough to turn towards some one for help, she thought, and in the meanwhile she did the best she could for the others. It was Peggy she most feared for, and yet at this very moment it was Nelly who was in danger of wasting her precious moments in useless dreams.

Of course her ideas now all ran on the political refugee. When she went for a walk she kept looking about her to try if she could see anyone at all like him. She hunted through the books in the house for stories of refugees, in order to get hints as to the best manner of helping them, and had a vision of managing his escape should Bismarck take the trouble to come over to England

to hunt him up. She found it difficult to settle which hero best represented Wolfgang König, and not being particular as to dates she weighed the various merits of William Tell, Garibaldi, Orsini, Hofer, and the Stuart refugees at St. Germains. Her holidays were only to last one week more, and then she was to go to the High School; it was all Peggy's settling, and it was quite dreadful. She knew she should be very shy and stupid, and the girls would laugh at her, and worst of all she would have no time for making nice plans.

Whilst Peggy was out of the way Nelly thought it would be a good opportunity to accompany Maurice, who had not again seen the refugee, and she was very anxious to have another chance of meeting him. So she told Miss Honeybun she did not care about walking, and there being no Peggy to insist upon it, very soon she and Maurice were walking across to St. Wilfrid's.

Upstairs in the nursery Peggy was extremely busy making a list of Arthur's linen and deploring various little extravagances which boys would insist upon, till all at once nurse remarked:

"Where are Master Arthur's new socks, Miss Margaret? you told me you would see about them. Have you got them down-stairs?"

"Oh, dear, how annoying!" said Peggy, starting up and blushing a little; "it was that tiresome Miss Bellew made me forget them. I never have forgotten anything before. You might have reminded me, nurse."

"It's not every one as likes to be reminded, Miss Margaret," said nurse rather pointedly; "but how Master Arthur can go off at eight to-morrow

fault if Master Toddles catches cold," said nurse in no sweet tone. But Peggy was not to be persuaded, bent on one object she was not going to be stopped, and in a few minutes she was walking very quickly across the square, holding Toddles' hand to make him come on faster. She knew her father would disapprove of her going out like this; but it was not ten minutes' walk, and with Toddles it did not look as if she were quite alone. Now she was the head of the family, she must judge a little for herself.

Toddles had an idea he was doing an unusual thing, for he began to be troublesome. Not liking quick locomotion, he dragged behind and stared into the area windows, finding intense pleasure in counting how many steps there were down to the bottom.

"Sister Peggy, Peggy!"

"Well?" said Peggy, who was not inclined to talk.

"Wouldn't you like to be a milkman and run down the steps every morning and evening? Cook said our milkman was a very nice young man."

"Toddles, don't repeat what the servants say."

"But nurse said cook said it, and nurse said she wondered cook didn't hold herself above the milkman. What did she mean?"

"Nothing, of course."

"But she did; nurse said you was no good to look after cook, and that she threw sand in your eyes. Didn't it hurt very much, Peggy? Bee once threw a lot of dust in my eyes, and I did cry." Peggy blushed at hearing this, and it did not improve her temper.

"Nurse has no business to gossip before you children."

"She thought I was asleep, Peggy, because I shut my eyes tight, but I heard all she said to Mary."

"It's very dishonourable, Toddles, to do things people don't know about."

"Then you and I is dishonourable, isn't we, Peggy, because Miss Honeybun doesn't know we's out?"

"Do come along, and don't be so tiresome; we are nearly at the shop, we are going to buy something for brother Arthur."

Peggy hurried into the shop, sat down on the first chair she came to, and looking important, asked for socks.

"It's for brother Arthur," put in Toddles, smiling up into the shopman's face, who tried to hide his amusement as he went off.

"Toddles, you shouldn't speak when you're not spoken to." Toddles looked ashamed for a moment, but soon got over the rebuke; shopping with Peggy was such a novel situation that he was quite excited by the event. When the required articles were displayed on the counter the little boy leant his small elbows on it and took the greatest interest in the selection.

"Peggy, do look at the pretty rings in this pair. How do they get painted on? does people with brushes do them?"

"Will these wash without shrinking?" asked Peggy, taking no notice of her troublesome charge.

"Certainly, madam." Here Toddles giggled and whispered audibly.

"Why does he call you such a funny name,

Peggy?" The head of the family blushed scarlet, and hastily selecting the socks, she paid for them and prepared to hurry away, almost forgetting her parcel and her change. Once out in the street she breathed more freely.

"Toddles, you are a very naughty boy. I shall never take you out with me again." The child put on a face of injured innocence.

"Why is I naughty?" At this moment the two reached a crossing. There were a good many cabs and carriages going by, and as Peggy waited a moment to let them pass she took hold of Toddles' hand rather roughly. This caused him to try and wriggle it away with the complaint in rather loud tones of,

"You're hurting me, Peggy, you is," followed by a general contortion of his small body, making Peggy resolve that on no excuse would she again take Toddles out.

"Now, Toddy, do be quiet and keep close to me as we cross, and look where you're going." And so he did till half-way across, when, looking back, he caught sight of such an interesting object that he forgot Peggy's warning.

"It's father behind us; do look, Peggy." A furious wriggle and Toddles had rushed back, but alas! at that moment a cab was coming by, and before Peggy could do more than give a little scream of despair and fright, Toddles was under the horse's feet. There was a shouting, a collecting of the crowd, so that Peggy could see nothing, and she was so paralysed by fright that she felt rooted to the pavement, and was gasping for breath. She heard some one say, "Is he killed?"

and another person called out, "They don't know; a gentleman has put him in the cab." Then Peggy seemed recalled to consciousness, and she was able to see that her father, carrying Toddles in his arms, had entered the cab and heard him call out in a hoarse voice:

"Drive quickly to Dr. Burton, No. 9 Warcote Square." It was only two minutes' drive, and feeling that she must know the worse, Peggy started forward. No one looked at her, for she had not been recognized as the little boy's companion. They fancied he was a runaway just recaptured by his father, so with trembling limbs and an exclamation of despair Peggy struggled on in the direction of home.

CHAPTER IX.

BROUGHT HOME.

PEGGY passed slowly along the familiar street, hearing nothing, not even noticing the passers-by. Only one idea seemed distinct to her mind, and this was that she had killed her brother. Then she went over and over again in her own mind how it was that it had happened; surely it was not her fault, she had tried to hold Toddles quite tight, but he had wriggled out of her grasp; it was his own doing entirely, and yet he was very small to have all this laid to his charge. Why had she taken him at all? Oh! it was nurse's fault. Yes, nurse had told her not to go out alone; it was not nurse's business to order her; she was under nobody but her father.

"Toddles, oh! why did you run back? It isn't my fault. No, no, it can't be."

This was Peggy's inward groan as she entered the familiar square, and hastily glanced towards No. 13. She had left it so full of life and energy, and she was returning to it as if in a dream—a hideous nightmare. Would people—would the others say she had killed her brother? This was where the greatest sting lay, or rather, it was

what Peggy realized the most fully at this moment, the terrible dread of the others. Her pretensions had been so high that the mere possibility of a fall was like scorching fire. Not that, not that—anything else.

There was no cab at No. 13, but looking across the square Peggy saw that one stood at Dr. Burton's door. He was their own doctor—a clever kind man whom they had known from babyhood. For one instant the girl thought she would rush across there and ask whether Toddles was better—she meant whether he was killed, only she would not say so even to herself; but her courage failed, she dared not, positively dared not meet her father, even though she kept repeating, "I am sure it was not my fault; I am sure it was not."

At last she reached No. 13, and the familiar steps seemed to restore a little of her energy. She was able to run up and with a trembling hand to ring the bell. Everything looked the same in the quiet square, evidently nothing unusual had been heard at home; her father had taken Toddles straight to Dr. Burton, without taking the trouble to inform anyone at his own house what had happened.

Mary opened the door in her usual manner, and seeing only Miss Margaret her face lost the interest she would have put into it for a stranger. She did not even remember that Toddles had gone out with her, so Peggy was spared any comment such as she dreaded to hear, and such as she must hear from nurse: "Where is Master Toddles?"

"Shut the door, Mary," she said in a hoarse voice; it was the first time she had spoken aloud. She was afraid Mary would notice the cab waiting at Dr. Burton's door and would know by intuition that Toddles' unconscious form had been brought in it. Mary did as she was bid, thinking Miss Margaret was "that ordering there was no pleasing of her." Then Peggy went quickly upstairs; she had been gone such a little time that everything was just as she had left it. Miss Honeybun had not come in, and nurse was still upstairs packing Arthur's things. As Peggy neared the nursery she remembered that the unlucky socks were in her hand, and as she entered the room she half mechanically handed them to nurse.

"Will those do?" she said, and her voice sounded strangely hoarse even to herself. Nurse unfolded the paper and looked at them with scrutiny.

"Well, Miss Margaret, they're poor things compared with what mistress used to get, and, why, good gracious! miss, they're a size too small. Why, these will be no use to Master Arthur. I hope you didn't pay for them, or perhaps if I goes myself they will change them." It was this last disappointment which brought Peggy's distress to a climax; she suddenly burst into tears. At this unexpected event nurse turned round astonished.

"Lor'! Miss Margaret. Pray, don't take on about the socks. If you had just asked me for a pattern-one, but—why, where is Master Toddles?"

"He's with father; and, oh, nurse, he's met with an accident, and he's now at Dr. Burton's, and, and—I do hope he isn't very very bad."

"Why didn't you tell me, Miss Margaret? dear me, dear me, let's get all the hot things we can, and I'll just warm his bed. However did it happen?"

Peggy had lost her courage seeing nurse "taking on" so much.

"We met, father, and—and Toddles went to him—I mean, went with him, and I really don't know how it did happen."

"Go and tell cook to send up some boiling water, miss, and I'll see to the rest; that's what comes of my not being with the dear lamb."

"Accidents may happen anywhere," said Peggy, feeling a little more cheerful now that the truth was revealed, and then she ran down to cook and gave orders right and left in a very business-like manner, and in so doing she eased her conscience. Hardly had she finished when the cab drove up to the door, and Peggy, feeling as if she dared not be the first to hear the news, was glad that nurse came running down-stairs full of anxiety about her "poor lamb."

Mr. Fenwick came slowly up the steps carrying Toddles in his arms, whilst Dr. Burton followed close behind.

"Dear-a-me, sir!" began nurse in woeful tones, "what a misfortune to be sure! but everything is ready for him. What is it?"

Mr. Fenwick looked so pale and terrible that Peggy shrank behind nurse, and it was the doctor who answered.

"His leg is broken, but I hope it will be all

right, with care. We thought he had better get home at once after the setting. Now, nurse, I will come up with you and Mr. Fenwick alone. Keep the other children away." The procession passed upstairs, and Peggy was left smarting under the sting of these last words. The children indeed! was she a child?—she who had done everything for everybody for the last year. These thoughts had time to find a place in her mind, because she felt so relieved and thankful that Toddles was not killed, only his leg broken. Of course that was bad, but children's legs easily mend again; she remembered having heard somebody say so.

Peggy had not stood long in this state of mind when the door-bell rang, and there came the clatter of children's tongues and children's feet. It was Carry running up the stairs followed by Arthur in full chase, but the former's headlong course was stopped by coming full-tilt against Peggy on the landing.

"Oh, Peggy, whatever was the cab doing here? we saw it at the other end of the Square just driving away."

"Toddles has been run over; his leg is hurt, nothing very bad. Hush! Arthur, don't make such a noise. Dr. Burton is here."

"Well, how was I to know? I say, is the little chap in pain?" Arthur was really distressed, and was a little ashamed of showing it.

"How did it happen?"

Peggy hated this question.

"Oh! he was with father, and a cab ran over him at a crossing."

"Isn't father in a way?" was Arthur's comment.

"Of course, we all are; but where are Nelly and Miss Honeybun?"

"Nelly didn't come with us, and Miss Honeybun is down-stairs. I expect Mary is telling her all about it;" which was true, for in another minute she came upstairs, and her presence seemed to be soothing to Peggy's troubled mind. She would have liked to have a good cry, and to tell her everything about it, to own to her that it was her own fault for taking Toddles out, and for her determination to have her own way. Peggy did not express this in words, even to herself, but some such feeling floated through her mind, and made her stand before Miss Honeybun looking sad and a little downcast. Such an extraordinary look on Peggy's face softened Miss Honeybun's heart at once.

"Well, well, I do hope poor Toddles will get on now. I never thought of his being out, poor little man. I suppose your father did not know why I left him in."

"No," said Peggy.

"Nurse told me how bad the cold wind was for him. Do you think I can help in any way?"

"No, I'm sure you can't; they won't have *me* in even, and Toddles will be asking for me directly he is conscious. Where is Nelly?"

"With Maurice, at St. Wilfrid's," said Carry, who always knew everything.

"It's just like her not to care about anything here," said Peggy half aloud, and then the softer mood melted away, and the opportunity of being honest went with it. Poor Peggy, if there was

one virtue she prided herself on more than another it was honesty of thought and word and deed. She was usually so brave, so outspoken, and yet just because she dared not appear at fault before all those whom she had been trying to rule, Peggy lowered her standard, and dared to stoop to an equivocation, almost a lie. She would not say, "I took Toddles out, and it was my fault that he ran into danger." No, she could not say this, her tongue refused to utter the words, but behind this there would come the thought, it will come out sometime or other, and then "what will *they* think of me?"

"Poor Margaret," said Miss Honeybun, gently putting her hand on Peggy's shoulder, "this is a very anxious time for you, but you must not take it to heart; I am sure everything is being done for the best. Won't you have tea as usual, and that will keep the others from being over-anxious?"

"Yes, of course, I will go down; tell Mary not to ring the bell. Why does Nelly stay so late? it is too foolish to spend so much time at the organ; she is only mooning, it does her no good."

Peggy bustled away, but all the pleasure of ordering was gone; she had a leaden weight at her heart. Why did not father or the doctor come down-stairs? What would the former say to her?

Just as Peggy had stopped Mary from ringing the bell, the front door was opened, and Maurice and Nelly entered, to find their eldest sister in no very sweet temper.

"You're ever so late, Nelly," she said, putting

all the misery she herself felt into her tone; but of course Nelly did not know the reason, so resented it by a look expressing hurt feelings. Maurice fired up in defence of Nelly.

"It's only five minutes late, Peggy, and see how often *you* keep us waiting."

"That's quite different. If I do, it is because business keeps me, and you two only amuse yourselves; besides, it's rather hard, when there is so much trouble in the house, that one can get no help."

Peggy now felt hers was righteous anger, and she began to forget her own wrong-doing.

"What trouble?" asked Nelly; her head was full of something else, still Peggy's tone roused her.

"Poor Toddles has been run over and nearly killed, and father and the doctor are upstairs."

There is always a certain satisfaction in being the bearer of strange, sad, and startling news, unless indeed the teller is the culprit. Peggy herself felt the importance of the situation and was pleased with the result, for Nelly turned deadly pale, and Maurice whistled softly as he said:

"Good gracious! How did it happen?"

This question Peggy particularly disliked; she had to go through a process of reasoning to herself before she could answer.

"He was with father, and somehow at a crossing—you know how tiresome Toddles can be, poor little fellow."

With Nelly, however, there was no need to reason; with a little sob she rushed away up the stairs, feeling as if she must know the worst,

must see her little brother; she loved him with a great wealth of love and tenderness, a love which she could not even explain to herself.

At the nursery door she met Mr. Fenwick coming out with Dr. Burton.

"Please tell me, is Toddles very ill?"

Nelly's upturned face would have melted the hardest heart, and Dr. Burton stopped in the middle of his conversation to answer her.

"Come, Miss Nelly, you must not look so pale or I shall have to prescribe for you. The little man is doing well, with care and quiet he will get round; you must try and not excite him."

"Arthur goes to school to-morrow; we can trust the others," said Mr. Fenwick.

"But may I just peep at him?" asked Nelly, "only one look. If I had been with him he wouldn't have been naughty, he never is with me," pleaded Nelly; and without understanding the purport of her words Dr. Burton took her hand, and opening the nursery door led her in.

Toddles lying on his own little bed was as pale as death and his eyes were closed, barely conscious of all that had happened, he was dosing. Nurse was sitting by him, and Miss Honeybun was gently fanning him. When Dr. Burton led Nelly out again he noticed that the sight had been too much for her, for she whispered:

"Are you quite sure he is not dead?"

"Of course I am. Come, Miss Nelly, don't be fanciful; and mind you keep that little piece of quicksilver, Carry, quiet; if the house can be kept still he will do well."

Nelly now remembered that Peggy would be

expecting her to tea, and taking off her things she went slowly down-stairs and found the whole party, except Miss Honeybun, gathered together.

"We had to begin without you," said Peggy.

"Father and Dr. Burton were talking to me, and the doctor let me have a peep at Toddles. Oh, Peggy! he looks so white and ill."

Peggy's face flushed; they had allowed Nelly to go in and had not thought of her; she, as eldest, ought to have been the first to enter the sick-room; it was too bad of father. Then a little voice whispered that she was the origin of all this trouble, what rights did she now possess even if no one knew it? for indeed no one seemed to care to inquire how it had happened, or perhaps Peggy's explanation had prevented further inquiry, and yet did that make her blameless?

No; and for the first time Peggy checked the impatient, self-important reply and said nothing. Maurice had noted the angry flush, however, and whispered to Nelly, who was next to him, half under his breath:

"Peggy Pepper-pot!"

Peggy caught the sound, and felt that even in this trouble the others would not take her part and would not give her their sympathy. Now for the first time she longed for it, longed to be able to tell them everything and to hear them say, "Poor Peggy, you didn't mean any harm," but they would not. And was it their fault? Little did the others guess that as Peggy mechanically poured out tea and ate her bread and butter, she was experiencing the bitterest feeling of her life, the feeling of failure and of being in the

wrong, of having been untrue to herself and others, and yet of not having earned the right to ask for mercy of those about her.

Of none of these feelings, of course, was Peggy sensible in their best or highest meaning, but a little of them all she did experience, enough to make her long to go far away from No. 13, far away from the management of her father's house and the "merry multitude," and in her heart she cried out:

"Oh, mother, mother! I never knew before how I should miss you."

CHAPTER X.

NELLY'S TEN SHILLINGS.

NELLY'S ideas had had a great shock on her return home by hearing of Toddles' accident, but we must relate what it was that had made her late, for usually a fear of Peggy's finding fault did in some degree keep her punctual. Just as the brother and sister were opening the door of the organ chamber, Nelly perceived that the interesting German had followed them up the path. He bowed in a very foreign manner, and took his hat off with such an air of conscious greatness, that Nelly at once thought of Henry IV. of France, who must have taken off his plumed cap to the fishwomen of Paris in just such a manner.

Wolfgang König carried a piece of music in his hand, and first addressed himself to Maurice:

"I must beg your pardon humbly, sir, for intruding again upon you; but your talent has drawn me here to listen to you, and the kindness of you and miss to a poor political refugee (here he looked sadly at Nelly) has perhaps made me over bold."

Maurice did not hear much of this discourse, he was looking at the music; it was something

he had mentioned to the German and which he specially wished to try over. König noted the look and remarked:

"This, sir, is the score we spoke of; if you will do me the pleasure of trying it, I shall—"

"Oh, all right!" said Maurice. "Come in here whilst I do. By the way, I haven't done anything about what you asked me yet; I will, of course. My father, Mr. Fenwick, knows all sorts of people, but not many of the kind of folk who can give you employment. What would be most useful for you? Of course I can't be sure they will be of any good, but an introduction is a help."

"Ah! it is everything, yes. I can play the fiddle —the violin. I know much, very much of music; but what can a man who suffers for his country expect to get? Nothing but scorn and persecution and—"

They were now at the organ. The young blower took up his position, ready to keep an eye on that little leaden weight which gave him so much trouble, and which he regarded in the light of a personal enemy, and Maurice, taking the music, sat down to try it over. Wolfgang König was watching his opportunity and now turned to Nelly.

"I wish to thank you, miss, for your kind thought last time I met you. It was you who had the true eye to see what I really was—a poor hunted man, thought unworthy by my own country to breathe my native air; and here in England it is very difficult to live."

Nelly's enthusiasm was not proof against this mixture of flattery and appeal to her sympathy.

She answered a little shyly, but with a look of deep concern:

"It must make up for a good many troubles to feel that you are suffering for a right cause. How I should have liked to have lived in the days of King Charles the Martyr!" (Nelly was a very staunch Royalist, whilst Peggy said Cromwell was a much more sensible man than Charles I., and the sisters sometimes had very warm discussions on this subject, as if their lives depended on which side they took.) Wolfgang König did not answer with any great appreciation of the subject, for he only remarked:

"There are martyrs now, miss. As soon as I can save a little money by hard work, I will go back to my country, and I will die fighting for the cause."

None of Nelly's heroes could have made a grander speech, and she was roused to say:

"Why cannot you go at once without waiting for money? if one waits too long—"

"Herr König, will you kindly tell me if this is the way you have heard this passage played?" asked Maurice suddenly, and the hero sat down and enchanted him by a brilliant rendering of the piece. Maurice, who had thought some of König's talk rather *humbug*, was now quite won over; a man who could play like that required nothing but to be known.

"I'll tell you what, Herr König, I'll ask my father to-day about Stanford; he could get you no end of pupils if he really took you up, and if he won't, there's Von Bücher. Have you been to him?"

"Yes, I once told him my sad story, but he was afraid I should be in his way and he would not help me; there is so much jealousy among musicians; it was soon after I left my country, my small property had been confiscated, and yet though I only asked him for a few shillings till I could turn round a little, he refused."

"How cruel of him!" said Nelly indignantly.

"You see, miss, how it is that I cannot and will never ask Von Bücher for help. If he were to lay his purse at my feet, I would not stoop to pick it up."

Nelly felt that here was a man whose integrity could not be doubted; no one could say he was covetous if he would not even stoop to pick up gold! She made up her mind that she would make Maurice write to his musical friends for him, for though her brother often promised he sometimes forgot to perform; Nelly, on the other hand, never did.

Maurice handed back the music to König when they had finished discussing it, and the latter took the hint that he was no longer wanted.

"May I beg you to keep this, sir, till next I see you, it would give me the greatest pleasure."

Maurice accepted with thanks, and Wolfgang König bowed himself out of the door; but Nelly, who had been fumbling in her pocket, ran after him and caught him just outside. She was very red, and hesitated as she murmured:

"You said that it was hard to get on in London. Will you please take this? I do not want it at all; and you can call it a loan if you prefer it."

It was a half-sovereign which Nelly had been

"WILL YOU PLEASE TAKE THIS?" SAID NELLY. PAGE 104.

treasuring up for some time, and which she now felt impelled to give to her distressed hero, only she would not for all the world that anyone should know it. The German glanced at the coin and saw it was gold, then he drew back.

"Excuse me, miss, I could not, no; your generosity is indeed a contrast to the sordid meanness of the rich, but for this reason I must decline to—"

"Please, don't," said Nelly, feeling that never before had such a great occasion of performing a noble deed come in her way; "of course when you get back to your property you can return it, but it is no shame to take what is lent to you. And will you tell me your address? if Maurice hears any good news for you I can send it; boys are so careless, but I shall not forget."

"Then, miss," said König, his fingers closing over the money which Nelly tried to give him as older people do a doctor's fee, that is, as if they were thoroughly ashamed of handling anything so base as gold in the shape of a sovereign, "will you direct to Herr König, 7 James Street? but you will understand that from my peculiar circumstances I do not wish every one to know where I live."

"Of course," said Nelly, "I can keep a secret; I have always wanted to have one to keep."

After this Nelly ran back to her brother, and remained plunged in deep thought till he had done playing. Here was a new interest in her life—something that would make her like a book heroine; and meek, shy Nelly had very grand ideas, which were all the stronger because she

never shared them with anyone. She never entertained a doubt as to the hero's truth; and if she had, Maurice's holding out the hand of fellowship to him would have reassured her.

It was Maurice who started up at last as he looked at his watch:

"I say, Nelly, we shall be late for tea, and Peggy will make a row."

"I always forget the time when I am with you in here," answered Nelly. "Maurice, isn't it sad that there are people like that horrid Von Bücher who refuse to help their countrymen, especially when they are political refugees?"

"The man does play well," said Maurice, who was better able to judge of music than of the rights of refugees.

Nelly continued:

"Did you hear him say he had lost his property? He doesn't look like an English gentleman, does he? but one never can *tell* about foreigners. I remember a very great French sculptor coming to see father, and he looked like a fat butcher."

"No, one never can tell about foreigners; but mind you don't say anything to Peggy — she doesn't care a straw for music, and I fancy she would laugh at your refugee."

Nelly winced at the bare idea.

"Oh, no, we mustn't tell her, of course; and you won't forget, will you, Maurice, about helping him? if you give me the letter I can send it. Bismarck must be a very cruel wretch to exile men who only follow their consciences."

"Ah!" said Maurice, "there was quite a Wag-

nerish chord in that thing he brought. I tell you what, Nelly, Wagner's music will beat all the other composers out of the field—see if it doesn't!"

"I suppose they'll be refugees, then," said Nelly; and it was at this moment that Maurice opened the door of No. 13 with his latch-key, and that Peggy received them with the no very gentle words already recorded.

For several days no one thought or spoke of anything or anybody but Toddles. His leg had been set and was progressing very favourably, but there was danger of fever setting in, and every care had to be taken to keep him quiet. Miss Honeybun proved invaluable, and she and nurse relieved each other, whilst Peggy once more took the others under her direction. Arthur went off to school, making Carry promise to write to him every day a report of Toddles; and Nelly petitioned her father to let her go to the High School at the half-term, as she wanted to teach Bee and Carry whilst Miss Honeybun was occupied, and Peggy had, she said, too much to do with housekeeping. Peggy, on the contrary, said she could teach her sisters very well; but this time Nelly carried the day, because everyone knew she could keep Carry quiet, whilst with Peggy it was a ceaseless struggle for mastery. On the other hand Nelly's way of doing lessons was most original, and quite suited Carry, who liked hearing stories better than being made to learn by heart; and of course Bee's lessons were of the most easy description.

Miss Honeybun took them all out walking

when she could get away, and on these occasions Nelly kept looking about her in the hopes of seeing Wolfgang König.

One afternoon a few days after the accident Carry said, as they were walking past some tempting-looking shops:

"What can we give father on his birth-day, Peggy? You know I made him a wreath last year, and he did not much like it."

"I should think not," said Peggy; "it was one of your wettest soppy-mossy things. I know he wants a new silk umbrella—that's a nice useful thing; we had better give him one. A first-rate umbrella costs a good deal of money. We three elders might give him that; and you, Carry, could join with Arthur."

Peggy had a way of settling presents which especially aggravated Maurice and Nelly.

"I can't afford much this year," said Nelly, blushing, for she remembered that her money had been spent in a nobler way than giving a present.

"Why, Nelly, you had half a sovereign the other day — I saw it in your purse, and you haven't been to a shop since; then why can't you afford it?"

"I haven't got it now," said Nelly, who could not tell an untruth. Miss Honeybun noticed the conscious look on her face and remarked:

"Have you lost it, dear?"

"Oh no; I—I—haven't got it now."

"Whatever *have* you done with it?" said Carry, who was always curious and pertinacious.

"Nelly always has some stupid mystery," said

Peggy with scorn; and this remark made Nelly still more crimson and miserable.

No more was said then, but when they returned home Miss Honeybun stopped Nelly as she was alone on the stairs and said gently:

"Nelly, dear, isn't it a pity to make a mystery about nothing — it only annoys Peggy. I am sure you did not mean any harm; but as there can be nothing you are ashamed of about your money, it would have been better to say it right out."

Nelly felt for a moment as if it would be better to tell Miss Honeybun all about Wolfgang König, but something prevented her and she was silent. No, she meant to be one of those heroines who can keep a secret, in this way the opportunity was lost, and Nelly went upstairs without saying a word.

CHAPTER XI.

WANTED, A DOCTOR.

"TODDLES is not out of the wood yet, Miss Peggy," said Dr. Burton kindly one morning; "but you may be very thankful that you have such a person as Miss Honeybun—she has been admirable all through. I am afraid that our patient will soon become more troublesome; he will find lying still so long very trying, poor little man!"

"We can always amuse him amongst us," said Peggy.

"I hear he is already asking for a story from Nelly, but we must have nothing as exciting as that. Bee does very well at present."

"Toddles will soon get tired of Bee's stories; her imagination does not go beyond what she sees before her," remarked Mr. Fenwick, who for the first time since his child's accident looked cheerful, for the report was now decidedly better. "By the way, Peggy, I wish you would come to the studio after lunch and give me the latest news. I think I will not come back to-day."

Peggy felt proud to say yes. Her father had been looking to her all through this illness, and she had almost forgotten, or hoped she had for-

gotten, the events of that horrible day. Mr. Fenwick let the doctor out of the front door, and then returned to Peggy in the dining-room.

"By the way, Peggy, how was it Toddles was out with you that day? I don't imply any blame to you, dear—only, of course, it was unfortunate; and also, why were you alone?"

Peggy pretended to pick up something on the floor; the question had come upon her unexpectedly.

"I was obliged to go out for something nurse had forgotten for Arthur, and Toddles insisted on—"

"I am not blaming you, Peggy dear," said Mr. Fenwick quite tenderly, and he even stooped and kissed his daughter.

The opportunity had come again, and yet Peggy had found it impossible to speak the truth; but she wished, directly her father's kiss touched her forehead, that she had been brave. Yet now it seemed impossible to draw back, when he was so kind, and just when the others had ceased to express any of their feelings of opposition.

Mr. Fenwick went out into the hall, took down his hat, and was almost gone when Peggy's remorse became so strong that she started forward and ran out into the hall.

"Father!" she called out with a sudden hope that if she told him all he would forgive her, "father! may I—"

It was too late, the door shut with a bang, and Peggy was left standing alone in her misery, to argue once again that, after all, it had been a pure accident which no one could help. Her

father was too just to lay the blame on anyone, and—well, it was perhaps better not to make a fuss now it was all over, and— Peggy went on arguing to herself, trying to persuade her conscience; but as this was a difficult task, she left off at last with a sigh, busied herself with household matters, and comforted herself by scolding Carry, whom she found making caricatures on her slate whilst Nelly was giving her a lecture on the reign of Henry VIII.

"Carry, how can you scribble instead of attending?"

"I'm not scribbling, Peggy, I'm illustrating the lesson. People say it is a good way of remembering. There are all Henry VIII.'s wives, and here's Thomas Cromwell—Nelly said he was a cruel man, so I've made him ugly; and here's Wolsey going out for a drive—"

"Carry, how foolish you are! Nelly, you might look after her better. What good do her lessons do her?".

Nelly blushed—she certainly had forgotten everything but her subject; and Peggy continued:

"I am going to the shop after lunch, and nurse goes out for her holiday then to see her mother, so there will be no one to take you out, Carry; you must stay here, or Nelly will take you in the Square."

"Mayn't I come with you, Peggy? I hate the old Square."

"No, you can't, so it's no use asking. Please, Nelly, don't go to the organ with Maurice, as I am going out."

Peggy did not wait for any answer, but went away quickly, thinking that unless she did everything herself nothing was right, forgetting that there are two ways of doing things, and that Carry certainly remembered her history better when she illustrated it, whilst if Peggy had taught her, it would have been a very dry and dull performance on both sides.

After lunch there was a general feeling of relief among the others when the door shut behind Peggy.

It was certainly a case of the cat being away; the mice in their various manners began wondering what play would suit them best. Nurse was out, Miss Honeybun in the sick-room—for Toddles was never left alone; Nelly was supposed to be able to keep the proverbial *eye* upon Carry and Bee, but having given one glance at them she settled they were "all right," especially as when she suggested going into the Square they groaned and begged to be allowed to stay with her in the dining-room. It is a curious fact to remark by the way that if Carry had been begged to stay indoors she would have immediately have said that "she did call it hard;" to-day, however, it was just delightful to remain and play with the dolls, though of course Carry said she only condescended to do it to amuse Bee; but she really enjoyed it very much in her secret heart.

"Don't you mind us, Nelly dear," she said patronizingly; "you like reading quietly, we know."

Nelly was decidedly dreamy to-day, the truth being she was anxious to do something for Wolf-

gang König, and Maurice had not written a letter yet, so when she heard him come down-stairs ready to start out she ran to stop him.

"Maurice, will you write a line to Mr. Stanford?—now do, please—about—you know, you did promise."

Maurice did not wish to be delayed, but assented at last, and came into the dining-room, where there was a writing-table.

"I say, Nelly, what shall I tell Mr. Stanford?"

"Say that you have become acquainted with a truly wonderful man, whose career has been one long course of heroic actions, but that he has met with nothing but disappointment at the hands of an ungrateful country." Nelly had got up this grand sentence out of a life of one of her heroes; she felt it would suit Wolfgang König admirably.

"Oh, I say! that's rather high-flown, isn't it?" said Maurice. "Mr. Stanford will think I've gone crazy."

"Maurice! why, it's all in the Life of—"

"But I'm not writing a book. Look here, will this do? 'Dear Mr. Stanford,—Will you do me the kindness of having a talk with Herr Wolfgang König, of whose musical talents you will be able to judge for yourself. He says he is a political refugee, and seems to be rather hard up.'"

"Isn't 'hard up' rather slang, Maurice, to put in a serious request?" suggested Nelly.

"Men understand each other," was Maurice's grand reply as he dashed off his signature. "If König takes this letter with him I'm sure he'll

get a hearing." Maurice was in a hurry, and putting the letter in Nelly's hands he rushed away. Nelly, left to herself, read the letter over several times, and sighed a little at its very commonplace style; but still it was something for the hero, and it would doubtless bring him into notice in the musical world. Maurice was really very well acquainted with the great Stanford, this latter having always recognized the boy's talent, and having persuaded his father to let him follow his musical bent. Mr. Fenwick had at first rather an objection to letting his eldest son take up the profession of music, for he fancied it would be but a poor prospect for him. However, Mr. Stanford had held out hopes that Maurice might develop into a real genius, and argued that if the lad had shown signs of artistic talent his father would have had no doubts whatever about allowing him to follow *that* career.

Nelly, feeling that she could not now alter Maurice's style of letter-writing, determined to send it as it was, but first she must put in a few words herself, just to say she hoped he would now meet with the recognition which true greatness deserved. Nelly sat down, pen in hand, and wondered how she should begin. Never before had she written to a political refugee, and she hardly knew how he should be approached. At last she took up her pen and wrote:

"Dear Herr König,—I send you the introduction my brother promised to give you for Mr. Stanford. I am sure he will do all he can for you, for he is one of the kindest men I know, and not

like the musician you mentioned. Whatever happens you will believe that one person at least is sorry for your misfortunes. I shall keep the secret of your address, because I have read how men like you are hunted down by their persecutors. Think of Hofer, of Tell, and many more, and you will remember how their cause triumphed at last, even if in the end they died—"

(Nelly was very much pleased with this last sentence, only she was not quite sure if it was kind to suggest her hero's death. However, she let the sentence stand, as she remembered that Garibaldi always carried his life in his hand for many years before his *cause* triumphed. She continued:)

"In any case, let us know the result of your interview with Mr. Stanford, and rest assured that my brother and I shall always be your friends. Yours truly,

"ELEANOR FENWICK."

The last lines did not please her so well, but anyhow, it was a better production than Maurice's scrawl, so putting both into a large envelope she directed it. But the letter must be posted, and how was this to be done? for she dared not put it with the other letters in the box, for fear Mary should wonder who Miss Nelly was writing to, or Peggy might be back, and she had a tiresome way of looking to see if all the letters were fastened up. No, there was but one thing to do, Nelly must take it out herself. She looked at the far end of the dining-room and saw Carry still playing with Bee's dolls; the children

were not thinking of her, so she would slip out; there could be no harm in just going to the pillar-box beyond the Square. There was no Peggy to ask, and it would be a pity to disturb Miss Honeybun. Nelly, having once made up her mind that the deed must be done, did not hesitate long. Here was another occasion for showing calmness, and especially discretion; this letter must be posted with her own hands. Nelly all the while imagined a running commentary on her actions, which blended very nicely into the heroine's deeds of daring, so that she could hardly separate herself from this imaginary girl, whose courage was worthy of the most high-flown praise. No one but an imaginative child could enter into Nelly's frame of mind. She had allowed her thoughts to be mistress of her instead of regulating them, and the consequence was that quiet little Nelly, with her thin, pale face, thoughtful eyes, and shy ways, was leading herself into strange forgetfulness of the rules she knew she ought to obey.

It was the noise of Nelly's shutting the front door which made Carry look up and run to the window.

"Oh, Bee! isn't it funny, Nelly's gone out alone and she's left us by ourselves? What would Peggy say if she knew? What shall we do now? We'll pretend we're lost in the desert or somewhere. Oh no! we'll have a shipwreck, and you'll be a little girl washed ashore, and then I'll jump from a chair into the sea and fish you out. Now, Bee, lie down quite flat on the floor, and I'll put the antimacassars over you to make-believe they are

waves with foam on them." Bee obeyed, and was soon a little white mass of crotchet-cotton, whilst Carry, who had the more amusing part, began jumping from off the best leather chairs to within a few inches of her sister, and then, after giving her a hasty snatch, scrambling on the chair (*alias* the rocks) again.

"If I don't catch you next time you'll be quite drowned, I think," said Carry. "Now I will pull you right up, but oh! Bee, don't move, because you are almost quite drowned, and I must fetch the doctor." Bee was glad to shake off the anti-macassars and smooth her little ringlets.

"I'm not drownded," she said, "but it was very hot in the sea, Carry."

"Oh no! it wasn't, it was awfully cold, and you're chilled to the back-bone, as nurse says. You must lie on the sofa, and I'll fetch the doctor." The sofa was much more comfortable than the floor, so Bee made no objections.

"You must make-believe the doctor," said Bee, who had been just a little jealous of Toddles having received so many professional visits from Dr. Burton, whilst she had had none at all.

"I'll tell you what, Bee, I'll *really* fetch him. He always comes here about five o'clock to see Toddles, and it's four now, so it won't matter his coming just a little sooner, will it?"

Bee clapped her hands; this was real fun. The doctor's house was just across the Square, all the children knew it well, for they often went to tea there with Mrs. Burton, the kindest of old ladies.

"You lie quite still here, then, Bee, and I'll go

and just say you are drowned. That will make him come quick, won't it?" Carry's spirit of mischief was roused beyond all bounds this afternoon; she was delighted at being forsaken by all her elders.

"I can't put on my own hat, because that's upstairs, but anything will do. Maurice's pot-hat, I think. Ladies wear that sort of thing often." Carry talked on to herself. "I heard father say he did not like them on ladies' heads, but then I'm not grown up."

"You won't be very long?" asked Bee.

"Oh, no! I'll run all the way, because time is of great importance for drowning people, you know, Bee. Now lie flat, and the water will run out. No; you must lie on your face, I think. I saw a picture in a book about it."

Bee didn't like this at all. However, as the doctor was really coming, she so far went against her feelings as to try the other-way-up position, and Carry, administering one more pat, ran off, leaving the front door the least little bit open. She was fleet of foot, and it did not take her very long to get round to the doctor's door, and, quite elated at the success of her escapade, she rang the bell bravely. The servant knew her very well, and to her question of,

"Is Dr. Burton at home?" answered,

"No, miss, but we expect him in every minute. Would you like to see mistress?"

"Oh no, thank you!" said Carry, beginning to think the joke was well over; but it was too late, for Mrs. Burton opened the study-door at this very moment.

"It is you, Carry, dear! What is it? Nothing gone wrong with Toddles I hope? The doctor will be in almost directly."

"Oh, thank you! Toddles is just the same, at least I think he is. I was coming to ask him—Dr. Burton I mean—to come over to see—Bee."

"What's the matter with her, the little darling?"

"Nothing much. She's only been—drowning."

"Been drowning, my dear! What do you mean?" said the good lady, looking alarmed. "How dreadful! Do go and fetch Dr. Jones. But why did they send you—?" Carry was half laughing, half frightened, and now wished to beat a retreat.

"Oh! I mustn't stop, I see Nelly coming back. Thank you, Mrs. Burton. It's all right. Don't trouble about the doctor;" and Carry made a dash past the maid and was gone, leaving poor Mrs. Burton quite dismayed, and wondering whether it was that Bee was drowned or that Carry had gone crazy. In either case medical aid was decidedly necessary.

At that moment Nelly ran up the steps of No. 13, and was delighted to find the door ajar. She could not remember leaving it so, but she concluded she must have done it, and she was just going to shut it again softly when there came the sound of light footsteps and a voice calling out:

"Wait a minute, Nelly; let me in; don't shut the door."

Nelly was now quite roused. Her letter and her hero fled from her mind, for she was utterly taken by surprise at seeing her little

sister rushing towards her. She was arrayed in her school-room apron, adorned here and there with ink-marks, one of her shoes was unfastened, and on her head was one of Maurice's pot-hats which he left in the hall, and which, being too big for Carry's head, she had stuck at the back of her hair.

"Oh—o—oh! Carry," said poor Nelly, "where have you been?"

"Do shut the door, Nelly, and don't look like that. It isn't anything. I—I went to fetch the doctor."

"You, the doctor?" They entered the dining-room together, and found Bee still on the sofa. At the same moment there was a furious ring at the bell, and Carry called out, "It's Peggy—and Dr. Burton."

CHAPTER XII.

A VISITOR.

IT would not be easy to describe the feelings of Nelly as she stood still to receive the volley of words and exclamations that Peggy poured out as she ran forward, nor her fright as she noted the look of anxiety on the good doctor's face. Carry, too, felt terribly guilty now that her joke had succeeded; and, to make matters worse, Bee remained quite still on the sofa a little out of sight, and Peggy addressed herself to Nelly, who was quite as much puzzled as she was.

"Nelly, what *is* the matter? where's Bee? how was it she was let out? it can't be drowning; it's some other accident; tell me quickly, instead of looking like that."

"Don't you see Nelly is frightened, Margaret?" said Dr. Burton, noticing the dazed look on Nelly's face, and therefore speaking gently. "Now, dear, tell me what has happened to Bee, and where is she? Carry gave my wife such a fright."

"I don't know," gasped Nelly.

"Don't know!" said Peggy. "Nelly, what *do* you mean?"

At this moment Bee, thinking that as the doctor had come to see her, it was nearly time she

should have his attention, gave a little cough. She knew, of course, that she ought not to do so under the circumstances; but the temptation was too great to be resisted.

"She's here," cried Peggy, darting forward, and Dr. Burton hastened to the sofa. Carry, really frightened, slunk behind a curtain, though, as the doctor bent over the supposed patient, she could not prevent herself from laughing inaudibly.

"What's the matter, dear?" asked the kind old man, taking the tiny hand.

"I'm drownded," said Bee demurely.

"Have you swallowed anything?"

"Oh, a lot of water! and Carry fished me out of the waves, she said, and then she put me on my face; but it was so hot, so I got on my back again, and then she went to fetch the doctor."

At this moment the truth burst upon the minds of those present. Nelly was overwhelmed with shame, Peggy too angry for words, and Dr. Burton, not quite sure whether to be cross or amused; however, as he was to see Toddles, he thought it best to pretend he had always been coming at this exact time.

"Well, really, Miss Carry—where is she?—I should like to know what you mean by this conduct, you young scaramouch, poking fun at the learned profession like this. By the way, Peggy, I was coming to ask you if there is any possibility of Toddles being moved into another room; the sun comes in too much upon him where he is now; we must keep him cool. Come upstairs with me." Dr. Burton hurried out, followed by Peggy, and Nelly was left with the culprits. It

was not so much Carry's naughty impudence that distressed her; it was that now it would be discovered that she had left her sisters, and then, perhaps, the letter she had written would be found out; but no, no one could make her tell to whom she had written. She tried to find some way out of the difficulty, but none presented itself. One thing Nelly resolved there and then, that nothing should draw her secret from her. Bee now demurely got off the sofa, seeing that Carry had quite left off make-believe, and that something was the matter with sister Nelly.

"Carry, you might have been more trustworthy when I was out," said Nelly, hardly knowing what she said. "You shouldn't have left Bee."

"There was no harm," replied Carry, tossing her head. "Besides, *you* went out and left us, and you see Peggy didn't like that." These were cruel words from a younger sister, especially as they were true. Nelly for the first time experienced something of Peggy's trouble; it was all the harder to bear as Carry excused her own naughtiness by accusing Nelly.

"Father will be so angry about Dr. Burton; those sort of things annoy him especially."

"He won't like your having left us; besides, I didn't mean any harm, and it was only make-believe, and you often do that, Nelly? And where *did* you go?"

"I went to post a letter."

"But Mary takes them every day, so you *needn't* have gone out."

Nelly had no power of scolding like Peggy, so took refuge in silence, and Carry, seeing she had

the best of the argument, picked up a story-book and began reading to herself as if she had never done anything but what she should.

Nelly sat down by the dining-room window, too miserable to do anything but stare out through the black wire blind, and, as may be guessed, everything looked dark through it. She began wishing she was not obliged to have a secret, and then called herself a coward for disliking a little trouble. No, heroines in books had all these sort of things to bear, and she must not shrink from it. Presently Dr. Burton went out without looking in to the dining-room, and after a time Mary came to lay the cloth for tea. Nelly knew that now she must prepare for the worst.

Accordingly down came Peggy and Miss Honeybun, whilst Carry, looking good and demure, began to get herself ready for defence. Nelly suffered more than can be expressed; to her shy sensitive nature any blame was misery.

"My dear Nelly," began Miss Honeybun, "whatever is this I hear? and Carry, what did you go to Dr. Burton for? I thought I could trust you, but I see—"

"Please, don't ask about it—" stammered Nelly.

"Well, I do think it's hard," put in Peggy, "that when I am away for half an hour, Nelly, you can't look after Carry. It was very, very naughty of Carry; but I do think you are the most to blame. Dr. Burton didn't like it at all; it is really making him look so foolish. He was very kind in passing it off; but I could see he was very much annoyed. Miss Honeybun, I hope you will punish Carry severely, but as for you, Nelly—"

"What's the row?" asked Maurice, coming in. "Whatever are you firing up about now, Peggy?"

"Oh! it's very easy for you to call me names; but really it is very unpleasant to be used in this way. How was it Carry could go out without your knowing, Nelly?"

Nelly turned crimson, but she was truthful.

"I went out myself, so, so—"

"Went out! Oh, Nelly, you know father doesn't like us to go out alone."

"It wasn't in the Square. I went to the pillar post to post a letter."

Peggy looked really surprised, such independent conduct as displayed by Nelly was more than astonishing.

"Whoever did you write to—Arthur?"

"No, I—I wrote a private letter, and it's no use your asking me, Peggy." Nelly jerked this out in desperation; but Peggy was so much astonished that she dropped the matter for the present. This was really a serious affair, and it must be inquired into by her father. Even Miss Honeybun looked at Nelly, wondering why the girl was so mysterious; she did not like to suspect her, however, and said no more. Only Maurice guessed the truth, and he felt he had better say nothing. Nelly would not like it, and perhaps he himself would get into trouble. It was a very uncomfortable meal; all the more so as Peggy was unnaturally quiet, and Nelly guessed that her persecution, as she called it to herself, was only just begun.

Before dinner-time Miss Honeybun had an occasion of talking to Nelly.

"Nelly, won't you come and read a little to

Toddles? he has been asking for you; the doctor to-day reports well of him; but there is still some danger of a relapse." Nelly assented, but just before entering the room, kind Miss Honeybun began again:

"What is it, dear, about this going out to the post? is it one of your make-believes? I know you enjoy those sort of things; but it is better not to tease Peggy about them."

"Oh, no, no," said Nelly; "it isn't a make-believe at all. Please, believe me when I say that I can't tell you."

"Dear me, I am sorry. Are you sure, Nelly, that you can't tell *me*? I think I am a very safe person for the repository of secrets." Nelly shrank within herself; fancy telling kind, matter-of-fact Miss Honeybun about Wolfgang König. Why, even his romantic German name would frighten her, she would never understand her feelings about him—which, perhaps, was true enough. Miss Honeybun, seeing Nelly was not going to confide anything to her, thought she had better drop the matter, though she was much puzzled by the girl's manner. Being fond of Nelly, however, she was sorry for her, and took the occasion of meeting Peggy on the stairs to say quietly:

"Don't you think this matter of Dr. Burton and Nelly had better not be mentioned to your father? It might trouble him, and I will see that Carry understands how wrong she was." Peggy did not like advice; but her own troubles had made her softer, and, much to Miss Honeybun's surprise, she answered:

"Yes; I won't tell father all about it; but really

Nelly was so very strange that I can't make it out; it is some foolish idea of going her own way, she is always trying to show me she does not care about me. I should not be at all surprised if the letter she posted was only to Arthur, and she wished to show me she could go out if I did. It is quite different with me; I am older than she is, and besides, father expects me to take the head of his house."

Peggy raised her head proudly, and did not notice Miss Honeybun's smile.

"Well, dear, let the matter drop this time."

Peggy quite meant to do so; but when the others were gone to bed, and she was alone with her father for a few minutes, she could not resist the importance of telling him a piece of news.

"Father, don't be surprised if Dr. Burton mentions a stupid joke that was played on him by Carry. He doesn't take it seriously of course; but it was very naughty of the child."

"Eh, what's that?" said Mr. Fenwick. A practical joke was what he much disliked.

"Nothing much, only Nelly went out and left the children alone, and so Carry ran over and asked the doctor to come and look at Bee, who was as well as possible."

"What was Nelly thinking of to allow such a thing?" said Mr. Fenwick sharply. "I should have thought that she was old enough to prevent Carry committing such follies. I must speak to her about it."

"Please don't, father, I think I have said enough about it. Nelly is so angry if one tries to show her she is wrong, I mean in her kind of way; she

looks so hurt and says nothing. Still you might say you won't have her running out to post letters again."

"I do hope Dr. Burton understood that it was only Carry. I shall have to apologize; some men would not have taken it good-naturedly."

Peggy escaped, almost sorry she had said anything, and yet still somewhat puzzled about the whole affair, for it was very unlike Nelly's usual conduct to leave the children when under her care.

The next morning everybody had calmed down a good deal, and Nelly, who had slept very ill, was surprised that her father only remarked when the family was dispersing after breakfast:

"Nelly, I am sorry to hear you allowed Carry to behave in a very unladylike manner yesterday; don't let it happen again. And you, Carry, if ever you play another such silly joke I shall have you severely punished."

That was all that was said; but Mr. Fenwick so seldom found fault with his children that even these few words were a terrible punishment.

Nelly as usual answered nothing, and only secretly rejoiced that no further harm had come of her adventure, and that she would not now be driven to refuse to tell to whom she had been writing. Maurice, boy-like, pretended to know nothing about the matter, and did not even mention the subject to Nelly.

That afternoon Miss Honeybun took Carry and Bee out for a walk. Nelly said she would sit with Toddles to give nurse a rest, and Peggy did not condescend to mention what she would do, she could not bemean herself to walk with Carry and Bee.

As ill luck would have it, who should drive up in her carriage but Miss Bellew, who came to inquire for Toddles, and to offer to take one of the girls for a drive. Now, of all things Peggy disliked driving with Miss Bellew; she had a close carriage in which she drove round the Park or went shopping. Peggy tried to make Nelly go, but in vain. Toddles was listening to a version of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp, and would not hear of letting his sister leave off.

"How very tiresome!" said Peggy, as she went up to put on her hat; "it's hard enough to have a family friend, but when she has a close carriage, it's abominable."

"Ah, so you are coming, Margaret. Well, it will do you good to have to sit still a little with an old-fashioned person like myself; I am sure it was a mercy that child was not killed. Did you say he was with your father? I shall tell him my mind next time I meet him. If he is mooning about the streets he ought not to take his children with him. Nelly is upstairs, you say; well, give her my love, and tell her she must not get to dreaming like little Johnnie head-in-air."

Peggy was getting into the carriage, and pretended not to hear.

"Perhaps, Margaret, you are getting somewhat tired of keeping your father's house; I was not at all surprised to hear of your misfortune. I sha'n't be surprised at anything I hear about the Fenwicks as long as this foolish arrangement goes on."

Peggy was inwardly raging, but contrived to look quite indifferent, whilst Miss Bellew continued:

"By the way, Margaret, can you come and spend the evening with me next week? Let me see, Tuesday will do very well. You need not mind about your mourning, as I shall be alone with a friend, a very nice person, whom it would be an advantage for you to know. I can't see how you are to meet superior people if this ridiculous arrangement goes on; of course it does not matter now, but very soon, when you are out of mourning, it will be very inconvenient."

"Still worse," thought Peggy, "as if I wished to meet people whom it would be an advantage for me to know." Certainly Miss Bellew had the power of putting Peggy out; so much so, that she now lost her usual *sang froid.*

Nelly had gone on telling the story of Aladdin till Toddles fell gently asleep, and his sister murmured soft nothings for fear of waking him. It was at this moment that Mary appeared.

"Hush!" said Nelly, holding up her finger.

"Please, miss, there is a person asking to see you."

"To see me! who is it?"

"Please, miss, a queer foreign sort of a person."

Nelly turned crimson, and jumping up followed Mary, or rather soon left her behind, and ran down into the hall, where Wolfgang König was standing.

Between dismay, pleasure, and embarrassment, Nelly was too confused to say anything but "Please come in here!" as she opened the dining-room door, shutting it carefully behind them both, as König went in making bows in profusion.

"Mees, I want to thank you for your letter, and for your brother's amiable note; it is true

generosity—greatness of the heart—but one little thing goes wrong in it; it has no address to the great Mr. Stanford. I would not trouble you now, only I asked several people where lives he, and they did not know. With us it is different; the poorest person knows where lives the great musician; but here in England it is not so."

"How stupid of us!" exclaimed Nelly, "and the worst is that I do not know it, and my brother is out this afternoon; but I will send it to you."

Herr König looked round the comfortable room, and Nelly fancied he was drawing a comparison between this luxury and his poor lodgings. She would have liked to have offered him to take some of the heavy furniture for his own house; but on the other hand the man who would not stoop to pick up gold must be quite above wishing for luxury. No, his sigh must have a deeper meaning. Perhaps he was regretting his own hearth, and longing for the Fatherland.

"Thank you, mees, you are an angel of kindness. Ah, if all were like you!"

Nelly was trembling for fear anyone should come in, so the flattery was lost upon her. She opened the door, and walked to the front-door as she said hurriedly:

"I wish I could ask you to stay for tea or something; but I cannot. Come next Tuesday again if you have no situation, and then—" There were footsteps on the stairs—that inquisitive Mary, doubtless—and Nelly said good-bye to her visitor as quickly as she could, taking care to run upstairs to Toddles again in great haste.

CHAPTER XIII.

A STRING OF PEARLS.

A FEW days after this Mr. Fenwick was busily engaged in modelling the head of a gladiator for exhibition on some future day, when the porter came to him to say that Herr von Bücher wished to see him for a moment, if he could spare time. The sculptor went up to his small room just as he was, with his blouse on, and found the musician sitting near the table drumming an air with his fingers on a drawing which lay there.

"No apology needed among artists, Von Bücher. You see I have come straight to you from the clay. What a time it is since I have seen you!"

"Yes, busy men like ourselves have to believe in friendship; but I have come to you about that boy of yours. Maurice, isn't it?"

"Ah!" said the sculptor. Maurice was often on his mind.

"Well, I haven't heard him for some time; but when I did I thought the lad had great talent. I didn't say anything then, you know, because I am a man of few words, and I can't bear the meaningless talk men throw at one's head; but I think I have heard of something to his advantage, as your

papers put it. I want to do something for the good of musical lads. There is a great deal done for boys who have a taste for drawing. You have art schools in large cities, and that branch of art is encouraged and patronized; but if a lad has a genius for music he finds it difficult to get good teaching, and he muddles on till, when he does get into notice, he has to undo the work of years. Besides the great rudiments, the grammar of music, how can a poor lad be taught?"

"I always fancied genius could take care of itself, Von Bücher," said Mr. Fenwick smiling; "however, you are a rich man, and I suppose this is some new theory of yours; but what about Maurice?"

"I am coming to that. I am going to set up a place where poor but true genius can be taught. I shall have a hall and a good organ. I don't care much about the pianoforte, you know; but a good organ, that will work well. I want your boy to help me in this, and I will in return carry on his musical education, so that he may be fitted to take a good position."

Mr. Fenwick knew that Von Bücher was making him a very good offer, for there were many who would give all they had for his teaching. He smiled as he held out his hand.

"Thank you; Maurice will think himself fortunate indeed, and as to the scheme, that too will be quite to his mind, only I think you are wrong. What is the good of helping boys unless you are sure that they have something in them?"

"You are quite wrong, Fenwick; it is good if the lad is deserving; but however clever he is, if

he is a scamp, why you may as well throw your money into the Thames. That reminds me that there is a young man somewhere loose in London now who has great talent, and yet who will come to no good—he is a scamp. I tried to help him, but it is useless. If he were not German, I would have him taken up by the police. By the way, if he ever comes to you, beware of him. He takes various names; sometimes it's Bach or Krupp. The last I heard of him was as König."

The sculptor was barely listening; but he laughed as he said, "I fear there are a great many clever rogues in London, that is why I distrust your scheme; however, I want Maurice to be interested in something. He cares for nothing but music, and he is too delicate for school—that would have knocked the musical mania out of him."

Herr von Bücher shook his head.

"When the divine music has been planted in the heart of man it is not for us mortals to call it a mania."

"I meant no harm. You may call this modelling a craze; but I wish some of my children had been artists. I have only one who shows the least turn for it, and that one has just met with an accident, poor little chap. If you had children, Von Bücher, you would not take up pet schemes!"

The musician shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and took his leave, promising to come over to No. 13 as soon as he required Maurice's services. His last words were, "Mind, I am not doing you a favour; it is because I believe in your son that I shall take him and bring him forward."

"You mean he is not a clever scamp, I see!" said Mr. Fenwick, and his cheerful laugh showed Von Bücher that the father was much pleased. Little did Mr. Fenwick guess that some of his visitor's words would again recur to him unpleasantly.

He went back to luncheon that day because he had a little spare time, and a change of ideas did him good; but to-day he noticed that there was a gloom over Peggy's countenance. Now, of course, when the head of the family takes to being melancholy it spreads to the rest of the household, and it is therefore the duty of those who take the lead to be always cheerful. This idea had never entered Peggy's head. If she was pleased she showed it, and if it was the day for the "pepper-pot" everyone was aware of it. Nelly was preoccupied; she had had great difficulty in posting a second letter to Wolfgang König, as Peggy had been more watchful of late, and had not allowed her "merry multitude" much liberty. Carry's curiosity had been awakened, and that sharp-eyed young person had been much on the alert when letters were in the question. She wanted to know to whom Nelly had written a private letter. Miss Honeybun, too, in her quiet manner, had been taking note of Nelly's doings; she fancied the girl was uneasy, and that there was something in her manner that was unusual. However, in spite of all this, Nelly had posted a letter to Herr König telling him Mr. Stanford's right address, and hoping he would be successful. She rather hoped now that Herr König's talent would meet with instant recognition, and that

when the world was ringing with his praises the name of Eleanor Fenwick would be associated with his fame and his misfortunes. These day-dreams were very amusing as long as Nelly did not run any risk; but she was beginning to be a little unhappy about the mystery circumstances had forced upon her.

"Well, children, are there any plans to-day?" asked Mr. Fenwick cheerfully.

"No," said Peggy somewhat crossly, "except that Miss Bellew insists on my going to spend the evening with her to see a very desirable acquaintance. I don't see how she can know whether a person she likes will be to my mind. Can't I send an excuse, father?"

"Oh! no, Peggy; it is very kind of Miss Bellew to take an interest in you." Mr. Fenwick did not mean to rub his daughter's temper the wrong way, but he succeeded in doing so by this last remark.

"It is very mistaken kindness, I think," said Peggy grandly. The phrase sounded well.

"I am afraid you mistake it." Then turning toward Miss Honeybun, Mr. Fenwick added:

"Don't you think, Miss Honeybun, that Toddles looks rather flushed this morning?"

"Yes; and I sent Mary to ask if Dr. Burton would come rather earlier."

"I could have gone myself if you had told me, Miss Honeybun," said Peggy crossly.

"Peggy Pepper-pot," whispered Maurice to Nelly, happily too low to be heard.

"Isn't it funny, father?" said Carry. "I asked Toddles to-day if he remembered about the accident, and he doesn't a bit."

"You have no business to talk to him about it," said Mr. Fenwick; but Carry never was repressed, and added quickly:

"How red you turned all in a minute, Peggy!"

"Carry," said Miss Honeybun, "personal remarks are never allowed." All the same she, too, wondered why Margaret had turned scarlet at the mention of Toddles' accident. She put it down to unhappiness, and to her being generally disturbed because of having to go to Miss Bellew.

"The worst is," said Peggy, unfolding a note when her father was gone, and only Nelly was by—"the worst is that Miss Bellew says, 'Come before five o'clock and spend a long evening with Miss Lily Neale.' I know it will be a long evening. I wish I could say I had a headache; but I never do have one." Nelly could not see the hardship; but being naturally sympathetic, forgot her grievance against Peggy and offered her condolences.

"I daresay Miss Neale will be pleasant. You know, Peggy, Miss Bellew's friends are generally rather pleasant. I remember how delightful it was when Mrs. Peel was there, she taught us some nice games, and was very kind."

"And then five o'clock! It is just like a baby being asked, I don't know whether to put on my morning dress or my evening one."

"All our dresses are black, so it does not matter. Why don't you put on your black silk, Peggy, and father's pearls? Just that string of pearls will look nice round your neck." Peggy did not often take advice, but Nelly had a talent for making her sisters pretty, and Peggy was

naturally so nice-looking that very little made her look well attired. It was not that Margaret really cared much about dressing herself up, but she thought that her dignity and her position required it of her, as many older people say when they want to find an excuse for buying a handsome dress.

"Well, that is a good idea, Nelly, and father will be glad to hear I have worn them. I will go and tell Mary to order a cab for me at five; one ought not to come exactly at the time one is asked, I have heard people say, and that will do very well; how I do wish you were going instead of me."

After this was settled the Fenwicks took a walk with Miss Honeybun, and came home at four o'clock in very good spirits. This state of things was not to last long, however, for Mary, when she opened the door, said in a dolorous voice:

"If you please, Miss Honeybun, nurse said I was to tell you that Master Toddles does not seem so well, and she would be much obliged if you would come and see him at once."

"Certainly; Nelly dear, I will send Carry and Bee to the nursery till tea-time to play with the dolls' house. Will you fetch them down if I am still with Toddles?"

Nelly said yes, and in her own mind she secretly thought that she would have a good hour for reading. She was in the middle of *Kenilworth*, and was longing to get back to it.

When Nelly wanted to read, she did not dawdle, so in a few minutes she was curled up in one of the dining-room arm-chairs deep in her novel when Peggy's agile step was heard.

"Nelly! Nelly!"

"Yes," said Nelly reluctantly.

"Do look at the clasp of these pearls, it wants rubbing up so badly. I wish you would polish it for me, because I shall have to do my hair again. If it is untidy, Miss Bellew is sure to make some rude remark about it; and it takes me ever so long, and then changing my dress and all—"

It must be owned that Nelly said "yes" with a pang; this cleaning of Peggy's jewelry would take up all her precious time.

"Oh! thank you, Nelly; you will find the brush and the powder in that little drawer there. I shall come down at five, and then you can clasp it on for me." After this Peggy rushed upstairs with just a little feeling that, after all, Nelly was very kind and good-natured, and that it would be very difficult to spare her, even though she was very aggravating at times.

Nelly dreamily began to brighten and polish the clasp, and in doing so she could not help admiring the pearls, which were very handsome, and worth a great deal of money. She found that her work was done sooner than she expected, and congratulating herself on this fact, she put back the pearls in the old-fashioned case with its faded blue velvet. How pretty they looked, and what a pity pearls were not as plentiful as in the days of Aladdin! So thinking, Nelly returned to her arm-chair, and soon forgot everything around her in the woes of Amy, till Mary's voice, always aggravatingly calm, said:

"Please, Miss Nelly, the same person has come

to see you again." Nelly jumped up in an agony of fear. It was getting on towards five o'clock; Peggy might come down at any minute; even her father might come in, and her secret would be discovered. Whatever could he want? She wished she had told him not to come to the house again. What if he were betrayed by this frightful imprudence!

"Tell him to come in," said Nelly, trying to steady her voice, and the "same person," alias Wolfgang König, the political refugee, entered. Nelly herself shut the door behind Mary, and hoped she would not listen. Happily Mary was one of those curiously apathetic people into whose composition curiosity has not entered.

"Mees, I have been to the address you were so good as to send me. I have sat long in the gentleman's hall waiting for him to come in, but he seems to live always out—"

"I am so sorry," said Nelly earnestly. "I am afraid my brother knows no one else; but if I do hear of anything I will tell you. I shall be at the organ to-morrow or the next day. Will you come there? I am afraid to-day—"

Nelly's tone was not so sympathetic to-day, because she was worried.

"Ah! mees, thank you; but if you could help me, or ask your kind father just to lend me a little money—a few shillings. I am expecting a remittance from my poor mother, and—" Nelly did not know where to turn for help. Her political refugee was as much a hero as ever, but then at this moment he was a very inconvenient hero. All at once she remembered she

had five shillings herself in a money-box; she had saved it up as the beginning of a fund for a watch; but now here was an occasion of self-sacrifice. At all events anything was better than appealing to her father, or than running the chance of Peggy's coming down-stairs.

"If you will wait a minute here I will see what I can do," said Nelly breathlessly. She opened the door softly, closed it again, and ran upstairs with fairy footsteps. Her room was next door to Peggy's; and as she entered and took down her money-box, she heard Peggy put down her brush with that decided bang which characterized her actions. Nelly found the box locked, she was obliged to look for the key, and this delayed her a few minutes. By the time the box was opened and the money in her hand she was decidedly flurried. Running down-stairs again, she opened the door and found Herr Wolfgang König, hat in hand, very near to it. Nelly was delighted; she slipped the money into his hand and said gently: "I wish it were more; but if you come to the organ-chamber to-morrow I will see what Maurice, my brother, thinks about it." Nelly received a bow from the hero, and "Thank you much, mees," as he departed, and she closed the street door with a sigh of relief.

Even that delightful thing, a political refugee, could be a great weight on an imaginative mind; and Nelly, having reached the dining-room again, felt her heart jump into her mouth as she heard her sister's decided footstep on the stair.

"Oh, Nelly! I do believe Mary misunderstood me; and there's a cab just driving up. Where's

my work-case? It's so dull doing nothing all the evening. Quick, Nelly! And those pearls—oh! haven't you done them? They're not in the case."

Nelly was hunting for the work-case, and Peggy was moving about quickly.

"Oh, yes; I've done them. They are in the case."

"No, they're not, Nelly; but never mind; put them away."

"Please, Miss Margaret," said Mary, coming in, "the cabman says he is in a hurry."

"Well, then, he shouldn't be: I'm coming. I don't know what time I shall be in, so don't wait for me, Nelly. Good-bye."

And, like a small hurricane, Peggy disappeared into the cab, and gave the address with much dignity to the cabman.

Only then did Nelly go up to the leathern case, with its old blue faded velvet lining. There, truly, was the little narrow channel where the pearls should repose; but no round shapes now lay there. Nelly could not at first remember if she had put them back or not, so she mechanically went to the other side of the room, where was the box of powder and the brush she had used. Then gradually her mind worked back to her past actions. She remembered putting the last polish on the old clasp; she remembered thinking what a good contrast of colour the pearls and the faded velvet made. Next she saw herself placing them back in their niches, and recollected that she decided to leave the box open, because it looked pretty; and lastly, she knew that when she took up the Waverley novel, the necklace was where she had left it. Only two

persons besides herself had been in that room before Peggy had said the pearls were not there; and in another moment the truth flashed into Nelly's mind, and she knew that only one person could have been guilty of this deed, and this was her hero, the political refugee, Wolfgang König.

So terrible was this discovery, so overwhelming in its consequences, that Nelly remained standing before the empty case as if spell-bound. Never had such a fearful termination to all her golden dreams presented itself to her mind; and, worst of all, she saw now that her castle in the air was shattered and laid in the dust, that she had been wrong, utterly wrong. When Miss Honeybun came down-stairs, released from Toddles' room sooner than she expected, what was her surprise and dismay at finding Nelly in a heap upon the floor in a dead faint. She raised her up, rang the bell for Mary, and between them they laid her on the sofa and applied restoratives; but it was some time before the girl opened her eyes.

It was now tea-time. Maurice came in, and he was told not to make a noise. The children should have their tea in the nursery, Miss Honeybun said, and Nelly must be left to rest; perhaps the heat of the day, or something else, had brought on this faintness, so the blinds were drawn down, and Nelly was left to "sleep it off." Then the governess remarked:

"Maurice, come upstairs in the school-room. Mary won't mind bringing tea up there; and whatever you do, don't go and disturb Nelly. I don't think it is anything serious, as she was quite well this afternoon." And Maurice assented.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONFESSION.

"TROUBLES," said nurse to cook, who came up after tea just to have a little talk, "troubles is queer sort of things, and as sociable as crows, as never come singly; first there was poor mistress—well, poor thing, she's gone to a better place than this is; then came Master Toddles' leg—that *has* been a trouble as no one knows better than myself. Not but what Miss Honeybun has done all in her power, as becomes a good Christian woman, being a stranger and all; and now here's Miss Nelly a-fainting flop down no one knows why. Depend upon it, girls as does those things don't do it for nothing, I think it's a bad sign; and as to poor little Master Toddles, the doctor don't like the look of him at all this evening, and whatever poor master will say when he comes home I don't know."

"Well, to be sure!" said cook without expecting her words to carry much meaning with them—"well, to be sure! but it is a pity Miss Nelly thought fit to faint in the dining-room. Mary has been grumbling about the stairs, Mary is very glad to grumble when she can; it seems to

make ner brisker like when she can have it out, and I'm sure there's few on us as doesn't like to relieve our minds at times."

"There's few as keeps their thoughts to themselves," said nurse mysteriously, "and I don't mind telling you, Mrs. Norton, that if I was to *speak* my mind I should say that Master Toddles means to follow his poor mama, and I shouldn't be surprised if Miss Nelly was to follow him, she's that pale and thin lately, and so nervous like."

"Well, I never!" answered cook, duly impressed. "You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do, but there—I must go now and look after my boy; he's feverish and tossing from side to side in a way I don't like."

The subject of one of these prophecies was lying on the sofa. She had refused a cup of tea and still felt queer, yet, in spite of this, she had also declined any company. She wanted to be alone, and was thankful to be able to collect her thoughts. If ever she tried to realize her past dreams she turned giddy; she felt she ought to tell some one about those pearls at once, but as yet her tongue refused to speak.

When she was a little better she crept off the sofa and went slowly round the room again, trying in spite of herself, to think that the mistake had perhaps been hers. It was she who had put the jewels in an odd corner in some moment of forgetfulness; but no, what was the good of hunting when she *knew* she had placed them back in their case? She wished Peggy were at home. Yes, she thought she could tell her, she

was so clever, so energetic, she would know what to do even if she scolded a good deal about it; but she dared not reveal it to anyone else till—Nelly knew that she must tell her father. Oh! that terrible moment must come, and what would he say? The pearls were not only valuable in themselves, but were a precious possession of his mother's. But Mr. Fenwick was a just man, if it had been a mere accident he would not have said anything, but now Nelly knew that she alone was answerable. How foolish she had been! "and yet," sighed Nelly, "how could her hero behave like this? I believed all he said, I fancied he was really a—a political refugee—I shall never, never believe in men again. Are they all wicked like this one?" At one time Nelly had a vision of rushing out to find No. 7 James' Street, and of begging Wolfgang König to restore the pearls, and she would never say anything more about it; but a very short period of reflection showed her how foolish and how impossible this would be, and she only relapsed into despair. She was half afraid to remain alone, and yet much more afraid of seeing anyone.

In going round the room she came once more upon the empty case. She closed it and put it away, wishing with all her heart that she had never seen either it or Wolfgang König.

At last she heard Miss Honeybun's firm gentle step outside the door, and sank down in an armchair.

"What! Nelly you have got up? You are better I see, dear. I thought it was not serious, as you were quite well at the early dinner. Don't

you think you had better go and brush your hair? Your father will be in soon, and Mary will have to lay the cloth."

Nelly looked at the clock, saw how late it was, and gathering up her own possessions prepared to retire.

"I sha'n't want any dinner, Miss Honeybun, my head aches still."

"Does it, poor child? Well, bed will be the best place for you. Will you take my arm, dear?"

"Oh, no, thank you, I am not ill," answered Nelly. She was wondering how she should tell her father. As she passed upstairs Carry and Bee peeped out at her curiously. Nelly was quite a heroine in their eyes because she had fainted "flop down," as nurse said. They envied her greatly, and had both been practising it with energy in the school-room, till Miss Honeybun had come to see the meaning of the noise.

"Isn't Nelly white?" said Bee peeping round, and Carry answered:

"Perhaps she's seen a ghost. People always get white then."

As for Nelly she entered her bed-room, and left the door ajar. The nursery was on the same floor, but at the end of the passage. After long waiting, or so it seemed to Nelly, she heard the distant sound of the opening of the front-door with a latch-key. She knew it was her father; all the fear and the shyness came back with renewed strength; her candle was lit and gave a faint light in the little room. Nelly put her hand up to her burning head and murmured,

"Oh, if Peggy were here!"—Peggy whom she had so often abused, and whom she had encouraged the others to disobey, and yet who always did help anyone out of a difficulty.

Mr. Fenwick stopped to speak to some one down-stairs. It was Miss Honeybun, doubtless, who was detaining him, and Nelly wished with all her heart that she would let him come up-stairs and so end her agony. A few minutes more and her father came up very quietly, and she heard him say:

"I am very sorry indeed. Would Dr. Burton like another opinion?"

"He is coming in again after dinner; he said he could judge better then, and that till then you were not to be too anxious, as what we are doing cannot be wrong."

"Ah!" It was a troubled tone, and Nelly suddenly understood how there was enough sorrow in the house without her adding to it. Mr. Fenwick passed her door.

"Father!" said Nelly, coming out quite suddenly into the passage, and startling him so that he made an exclamation:

"Nelly, what is it?" he said a little sharply. His mind was full of his boy—his wife's darling, for Toddles being her youngest son had been her especial pet.

"May I speak to you a minute?"

"What, not undressed yet, Nelly?" said Miss Honeybun, "I thought you wanted to go to bed. Nelly has been a little faint this afternoon," she added turning towards Mr. Fenwick.

"If it is only that, wait a little, Nelly; I must

go and see Toddles. I quite thought all danger was over. I suppose you have nothing very important to say. Where is Peggy? Ah! gone to Miss Bellew. Well, a little change is good for her, poor child." He passed on to the nursery, feeling that he was but ill fitted to be both father and mother to his children, and yet wishing he could make everything go smoothly. It was at such moments that a pang of fresh grief seized him; his wife had made his life so happy that he could not get reconciled to her loss.

Nelly was once more left watching and trembling. If she had been Peggy and had had her courage she would have burst out with the bad news and not delayed, but Nelly could not do so.

Once in Toddles' room Mr. Fenwick forgot all about Nelly. He stooped down over the little white bed, and gently took the tiny hot fingers in his large strong hand, and he noted with anxiety how the child's thin cheeks were flushed; worst of all, Toddles barely seemed to know him. Nurse and Miss Honeybun did all they could for him, but nothing would quiet the restlessness. There is nothing sadder than to see a child suffering, and the mystery of pain is so great when met face to face near a little one's bed, that the soul can only cry out to the Loving Father to teach us the meaning of it, and to show us more plainly how through pain and death will come life and joy in the great Eternity.

"You ought to go to your dinner, sir," said nurse at last. "I daresay Dr. Burton will come soon after eight o'clock; he is sure to keep his time." Mr. Fenwick rose from his chair, and

with a sigh prepared to follow this suggestion. He closed the nursery door softly, and was walking away, when all at once came again Nelly's pitiful cry of "Father!" Certainly her punishment had already been severe.

"Eh?—ah! I remember; what is it, Nelly? be quick, as I am in a hurry." This request of "being quick" is never encouraging to a penitent; Nelly was nearly made speechless by it, but gathering up her remaining courage she said:

"Father, you will be angry with me. I know I deserve it, but I did not mean any harm. I thought I knew men's faces when—"

"My dear Nelly, what nonsense are you talking about? really—"

"Oh, it isn't nonsense, it's about Peggy's pearls. I—I—have robbed her of them."

Mr. Fenwick was seriously afraid Nelly had lost her senses; but trying to calm his impatience, he said:

"We can't talk in the passage, it will disturb Toddles, come into my dressing-room; and now make haste, child, and say what you have to say, for I have quite enough to do without puzzling out your imaginary stories."

"I knew you wouldn't understand," said poor Nelly, who really found it difficult to explain all the wild fancies that had led her step by step into this trouble. "I thought I should like to be like some heroine in a book, you know, father—Flora Macdonald, or one of the Queen's Maries, or lots more; and then one day a man came to us at the organ chamber, he was a musician—he really was, Maurice will tell you so; and he looked

very nice too, at least I thought so, and he told me he was a political refugee, at least I asked him whether he was, and he said yes, and then I tried to help him, because he trusted me with his address, and I meant to do all I could for him. Yesterday when I was alone in the dining-room, just after I had rubbed up the gold clasp of Peggy's pearls, he—Wolfgang König—came, and I only left him about four minutes to fetch him my last five shillings, and when I came back—" Mr. Fenwick was now quite alive to the interest of the question; he suddenly took hold of Nelly's arm.

"Nelly, you don't mean to say he has taken those pearls? They are extremely valuable; but apart from their money value I would not have them lost for anything in the world. They belonged to my mother, and were worn by yours. Tell me at once, are they gone? and why did you not tell me before?" Nelly shivered with fright.

"He took them—I am sure he did, and I wanted to tell you just now, but you would not stay to listen. And oh! I am so, so sorry! It was all my fault, but I never fancied anyone could be so very, very wicked."

"Or so very, very foolish as you have been, Nelly. There is not a moment to lose—I must find Maurice—give me the name and address you have guarded so carefully."

"Wolfgang König, No. 7 James Street," said Nelly.

Nothing could be worse than her father's words of scorn; he took out his pocket-book and wrote down what she said.

"Now for his description."

"Rather tall," said Nelly, recalling her hero's appearance with burning cheeks; "dark eyes and dark moustache, a very straight Greek nose, curly hair, and taper fingers."

"Pshaw!" said Mr. Fenwick, "tell me how he was dressed—that will be more to the purpose."

"Oh! I—I don't know—I only looked at his face; but I think he had a queer kind of overcoat with a cape."

"Who let him in?"

"Mary. It was the second time of his coming; and indeed he never took anything before. Perhaps he was very hungry and couldn't help it."

"My dear Nelly, I never knew till now how silly girls could be; there, go back to bed if you like. I wish Peggy were here—perhaps we should get a little common sense then. I should have thought that, with Toddles ill—"

"Oh, father!" cried Nelly in an agony of misery; and in truth Mr. Fenwick was unjust, but few men under the circumstances would have waited to consider what were the real motives of the culprit. At all events Mr. Fenwick did not pause for longer conversation; without stopping to dress for dinner, he ran down-stairs, called Maurice, and to the astonishment of Mary, both went off together, leaving word they would be in as soon as possible.

Nelly could not go to bed—indeed she was too miserable to do anything but creep on to the landing and sit on the stairs; so that when the doctor came he found her there, and was very nearly treading on her in the darkness.

"Bless me, Miss Nelly! what are you doing here, I should like to know?"

"I was waiting for father to come; and oh! Dr. Burton, is Toddles *very* ill? You can't think how very, very unhappy I am."

"Eh! well, that won't mend anything. Where's Miss Honeybun and our energetic Peggy? Won't they comfort you?"

"No, no one can. Oh, Dr. Burton! you are always so kind, I don't mind telling you—I let a—a robber get into the house and steal some pearls—very valuable things which father cared for; and now he's gone off to try and find them —father I mean. I don't think he will ever, ever forgive me. And Peggy's at Miss Bellew's, and Toddles is ill, and I do think we are a very unfortunate family."

Never before had Nelly made such a long speech; and the kind-hearted man, somewhat mystified by the story, saw how really distressed the girl was. He was not too much in a hurry to offer comfort.

"I don't quite make out your story, Nelly; but as to never being forgiven, I think there is very little likelihood of your father being so hard-hearted. Come with me to Toddles' door, if there is any errand to do you will be of use."

Dr. Burton knew that to be "of use" was a great comfort to any distressed little mind. He continued:

"And so the pearls are gone; but you know, Nelly, it is rather difficult to dispose of valuable property all at once, and our police are clever men."

"Oh!" groaned Nelly, "I never thought about the police."

"Didn't you?—very useful people. Now hush! and wait here a moment."

Dr. Burton went in softly to Toddles' room, where nurse and Miss Honeybun were still anxiously watching over him.

"Have you seen master, sir? He does take on so," whispered nurse.

"He is out, but I will have another opinion." He opened the door, wrote something on a piece of paper, and told Nelly to run down to Mary and ask her to take it to his house, adding: "And then, Miss Nelly, promise me to get something to eat and go to bed. If you do that I will make your peace with your father—that is a bargain."

"Thank you," said Nelly gratefully. It was the first ray of comfort she had had since the terrible truth had burst upon her.

"Good-night! child; and don't be alarmed if you hear me walking about in the night, because I shall sleep here."

"I *am* glad," said Nelly. She felt that everything would be better in that case—Toddles and herself would be under protection. Then, true to her promise, she went to bed, and from sheer weariness she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XV.

LILY NEALE.

WHEN Peggy arrived at Miss Bellew's house she was not at all "at her best." This delicate way of implying that she was decidedly cross would never have occurred to blunt Miss Bellew; but a surprise awaited Miss Margaret Fenwick, for when she entered the drawing-room she saw that it was empty, and the footman said that "Miss Bellew was sorry not to be able to see Miss Fenwick, but that Miss Neale would be down in a minute."

Peggy sat down with a "flop" of temper, as much as to say, "That's too bad!" and she did really mutter aloud, "Miss Bellew might have sent me word not to come. As if I wanted to spend an evening with one of her stupid old friends!"

At this very moment the door opened and Peggy half-crossly turned round, and then did not move from very surprise, for there entered the prettiest young lady she had ever seen. She was about twenty years old, tall and slight, with abundant fair hair, dark-gray eyes, and one of the gentlest, sweetest expressions possible. Peggy fancied she was looking at a vision that would disappear; and when she realized that this really

was Miss Lily Neale, I must own that poor Peggy forgot all her resolutions of keeping up her dignity and acting as Miss Fenwick, the head of the family. Instead of this, she fell there and then desperately in love with the stranger. Peggy never had fallen in love before, and she could not at all tell why she did so now—she only knew that such was the case.

Anyone who has studied girl nature will be aware that sudden adorations are not uncommon to girls of Peggy's age, though with some it happens so often that it leaves but little impression; yet, on the contrary, with some strong natures this falling in love happens but once, and really affects the character for good or evil.

Miss Neale unconsciously did quite the right thing to win Peggy's affections—she treated her as an equal.

"Miss Bellew is so very sorry, Miss Fenwick, that she cannot see you this evening, but she hoped you would put up with my company; it will be so pleasant for me to have you, otherwise I should have been left alone. We can have a good talk, can't we?"

Peggy assented, feeling that she was looking very stupid when she wished especially to look her best before this angel of beauty and sweetness, and not being at all imaginative, she settled that Miss Neale was perfect, and dismissed any other side of the question.

Very soon Miss Neale was drawing her out, asking her about her home and her brothers and sisters, and saying she hoped to come and see Mr. Fenwick's studio.

"Will you really come?" asked Peggy quite gently. "I should like you to see all the others; and then father's works—he is so much pleased to show them to people who *really* care. I wish I did, but it is not in my line at all; besides, I have to look after the family."

"You must find it difficult and very anxious work," said Miss Neale.

"Oh, no; why should I?" Here the real Peggy peeped out.

"Because," said Lily Neale thoughtfully, "all responsibility is such a heavy burden. It is only that one knows one will be helped to bear it, otherwise no one would run the risk of failure."

"That depends on people themselves. Now, my sister Nelly is always in the clouds; she would certainly fail. But tell me about your home. I wish," said Peggy with a great effort—"I wish you were my sister."

Lily Neale laughed, but her heart went out to the motherless girl, whose earnest, determined face looked as if she could face any danger. She had expected to find Peggy quite disagreeable from what Miss Bellew had said.

"My home is not such a bright one as yours, I fancy; I live with an uncle and aunt—my parents died when I was young. Uncle is very old, and can't bear the sight of strangers, and likes me to read to him a great deal; and aunt is a little childish now, and looks to me to set all her worsted-work to rights. Poor dear! she never can finish any of the many slippers and stools she begins. I sometimes wish we could have a sale of all her beginnings."

This picture, melancholy enough in the telling and far worse in the reality, appalled Peggy, whose whole experience had been so bright and happy, at all events till her mother's death.

"And do you live there always? Oh!—"

"We used to live in the north, in a very dreary place, indeed; but my aunt was ordered south; so with great difficulty we three have moved ourselves to a pretty cottage on a Hampshire heath. It is a little lonely, but oh, the country is so beautiful! and when I get out for what uncle calls 'a little run,' I feel as if I could not be grateful enough to the pine-woods, and the heath and gorse, and every beautiful thing I see. Miss Bellew spent a month last year at a house a mile from ours, and that is why I am here; but I must not stay more than a week, as the lady who has taken my place does not like being so much indoors. There, you see, my life has very little in it to interest you."

"Do you get your own way?" asked Peggy.

Miss Neale laughed, a happy laugh, though, as she answered:

"What would uncle say to hear you ask such a question? He is a very decided man in all matters; we never dare alter anything of our routine without leave." Then more gravely she added: "But you know all our work is given us by the One who knows what is best for us—especially best, I mean—and none of our personal wishes could be better."

From anyone else Peggy would have objected to hear what she called "Sunday talk," but what Miss Neale said sounded perfect; besides, Peggy

had rightly seen that the special characteristic of her new friend was simplicity in thought and deed.

They spent a very pleasant evening together, with the curious result of making Peggy feel that she was not leading the higher life which evidently Lily Neale was striving after; and that she had no hardships to bear in comparison with those of this beautiful earnest girl.

But how had Peggy used her own life, and how had she profited by her blessings? That evening conscience told her many unpleasant truths, though Lily Neale said nothing more approaching "Sunday talk," and only quite accidentally showed Peggy the meaning of much which the younger girl knew, but had never carried out into her daily life. Among other unpleasant thoughts came the remembrance of all the episode of Toddles' accident. How would Lily Neale have behaved in all this? We have shown that Peggy was really clever and quick in her work; she was no less so in her reasoning powers, when once the veil of self-conceit was partially drawn aside. At last, when it was time to go away, Peggy was quite sorry to say good-bye, and as she put on her hat she remarked gravely:

"I wish I were more like you, Miss Neale; then, perhaps, the others wouldn't think I was always wrong, or cross, or something—only perhaps I am. I *mean* to do the best, but I don't often succeed in pleasing them."

"It is difficult," said Miss Neale. "I am often impatient with uncle, especially when he won't

do something which I fancy is best for him. There, good-night! Forgive me if I have talked too much about myself."

"Forgive you! Indeed I want to thank you. I am so glad I came. Do you know, I thought you would be a tiresome old maid, and I know I was very cross till I saw you."

Lily laughed as she answered:

"Don't talk of tiresome old maids in this house; Miss Bellew is so kind when one gets over her manner."

"Ah," said Peggy, laughing, "but I never do."

Then she actually kissed Miss Neale, who returned the greeting heartily, thinking that Miss Bellew did not really know how nice her young friend could be. Lily never dreamt it was her influence that had worked a miracle!

Peggy could think of nothing else in the cab but of Lily Neale. How good, how beautiful, how altogether unlike everyone else she was! If only she would some day learn to love Peggy a little. "Only I expect I am much too horrid for her to like me," and in this humble frame of mind Peggy reached No. 13.

The door was opened before she had time to ring, and Mary's countenance expressed no pleasure. Peggy felt that she must once again put on the feelings of the "head of the family," and said grandly:

"I am afraid I am rather late, Mary. Where is father? I suppose the others have gone to bed."

"Yes, Miss Margaret; but Mr. Fenwick is with Master Toddles, and the doctor is there too. Master said I was to tell you he was not to be

disturbed, and that you was to go to bed. There's been another doctor to-night to see Master Toddles, and nurse says he said he was very ill indeed."

Mary delivered this speech in a very solemn voice, and a cold shiver seemed to run through Peggy's veins. Was her pleasant evening to end in this way, and was Toddles really very ill again, after having got on so very well? It was hard upon her.

"When did the other doctor come?" she asked quite gently.

"Just after the policeman, miss, and that was about nine o'clock."

"The policeman?"

"Yes, miss, your pearls has been stolen by a young man Miss Nelly asked to the house."

"My pearls?—a young man—what do you mean, Mary, and where is Miss Nelly?"

"Asleep, miss, and I'm sure me and cook don't mean to stay in a house where such strange things happen, it is very *onpleasant*, miss, when things is lost; so if you could find it convenient to find some one else this day month we should feel obliged."

"I am sure it is very unpleasant of you and cook, Mary, to think of yourselves at once. No one accused *you* of taking anything, but I don't understand the whole story." Peggy was very much disturbed and put out.

"We don't want to be unfeeling, miss!" said Mary, softening a little; "but every one has their feelings, and when a police comes down the area, and says he wishes to see all the servants, I put

it to you, miss, whether you wouldn't be sent into a state of nerves. Cook was ready to go into hysterics; and when the police asked me if I had a brother I burst into tears, seeing, miss, my poor brother died only last week, as I told you."

"Well, the policeman couldn't know that, and if it's only my pearls I am sure I don't care; but do leave them alone, and tell me about Toddles."

"It's high fever, miss, they've taken his temperature, nurse said, under his tongue, and nurse is near worn out, and so is cook with crying."

Poor Peggy! here, indeed, was a peck of troubles.

"Did father really say I was not to disturb him?"

"Yes, miss, but Master Maurice is in the drawing-room."

Peggy ran upstairs in no happy frame of mind, and found Maurice reading the *Times*.

"Maurice!" said Peggy quickly.

"Well," was the sulky answer.

"Whatever is the matter? Since I left everything seems to have gone wrong."

"You couldn't have altered it if you had been here," was the unfriendly answer, which made Peggy wince.

"Oh, Maurice, I didn't mean that. I wish you wouldn't always misunderstand me."

"You don't care to make yourself understood, I should say. You don't care about other people's feelings. If you had looked after Nelly more she wouldn't have gone and made such a fool of herself."

"Maurice! as if I wasn't always looking after everybody." Which was true, but then it was in

Peggy's own domineering way. "But do explain about this robbery, I can't make head or tail of it."

"Oh! it's simple enough, only father's as put out as he can be about it, and says I am to blame, when I did nothing at all, but give this man Wolfgang König a letter to Stanford the musician. There was no harm in that; but Nelly went and made up a lot of rubbish, and fancied he was some great gun, a political refugee she called him, and she gave him her money and wrote to him. The consequence was, he came here and took off your pearls when her back was turned. I am sure I had nothing to do with it."

"That's where Nelly's money went to then!" said Peggy, suddenly enlightened, "and that letter she was so mysterious over!"

"Yes, I suppose so; and if you hadn't been so sharp upon her I daresay she would have told you." Maurice was so vexed at the whole affair, which, in spite of all he could say, would, he knew, be associated with him, that he was ready "to bite off everybody's nose," as Mary put it; he having already given her a bit of his mind, because she had let in the German without telling anybody, to which Mary had answered, "She wasn't like some in the house, whom she could name if she would, as always pryed into the affairs of their betters; *she* did her duty, and didn't meddle with things as didn't concern her."

As to poor Peggy, she stood before Maurice for the first time in her life silent and dismayed at the overwhelming troubles that had come upon them all at once. The influence of Lily Neale was still upon her, and prevented her retaliating

upon her brother, though she felt that he was not blameless. Maurice went on:

"Father went out without his dinner, and we both ran about everywhere to find traces of this rascal; the address he gave Nelly was of course useless; he had left it some days, and the police had to be appealed to. They came here, and there was such a rumpus in the kitchen. All the servants gave warning on the spot; and then there's Toddles awfully ill. Dr. Burton is staying up with him."

Maurice was thoroughly disgusted with the household affairs. "I am sure," he continued, "it's fortunate Miss Honeybun is here; of course the only time you would have been of some use you were out."

"Why didn't you come and fetch me?" said poor Peggy, feeling as if she were falling from some very high position—say the summit of St. Paul's—to a very low one, the bottom of the Thames! She had been able to ride at the top of the waves before; but this deluge was too much for her. Maurice's blame was only one more misery to add to the rest. One good result there was, however, it made her sympathize with Nelly; nothing teaches sympathy so much as the want of it one's self.

"Won't you go to bed, Maurice?" she said at last. "I suppose we can't do anything more about that horrid robber, and father says I am not to go near the nursery."

"Oh, I shall stay up here; there may be some one wanted; don't mind me. Good-night," and Maurice, settling himself in the most comfortable

arm-chair, took another for his feet, put a rug over himself, and prepared to enjoy his position as far as circumstances would allow. Peggy turned slowly away, feeling that, with Maurice at all events, she could not regain her lost influence; she fancied how Lily Neale would have acted; how she would have been able to win the boy's love and prove a real support to her sisters. "If she had been in my place it would have been different. Only there, I am I, and I know I am very unlike what *she* is, and always shall be, I suppose."

All was quiet upstairs, but just as she passed Nelly's door, Peggy fancied she heard a little sob. She paused, heard it again and went in.

"Nelly, are you awake?"

"Oh, it's you, Peggy. I have been to sleep; but I had such a horrid dream that I woke up crying. I am so glad you came in. I couldn't make out if I were really dreaming or awake. Oh, Peggy! have you heard, and do you know how Toddles is?"

Peggy sat down on Nelly's bed so gently, and looking so subdued that her sister could not make it out at all. Only she felt glad that there was some one who did not look angry.

"Yes, I've heard all about it. Poor Nelly, *I am* so sorry for you; don't mind about their being mine. You know I don't care a bit about pearls; but, of course, father must have been rather sorry. Never mind; the thief is sure to be found. I wish you had told me; but—" Peggy paused, she knew that she had not given Nelly much sympathy. "I expect," she continued, to Nelly's extreme sur-

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prise—"I expect it was my fault. I didn't mean to be cross; only I did want everything to go right, and now everything has gone wrong."

"Oh, Peggy! how jolly you are to-night. I wish I had told you; only I did really think it was true, and I was so afraid you would laugh at me. Do go to bed now; I shall be able to sleep again. I am so glad you are not angry about the pearls."

For the first time for many years the sisters gave each other loving kisses, and both knew that evening that after all, and in spite of all, a sister is a very precious possession.

CHAPTER XVI.

ON A BETTER FOOTING.

BUT Peggy's night was not to pass quietly, for about two o'clock she was aware that some one stood by her bedside, and she started up wide awake.

"What is it? Oh, Miss Honeybun—"

"Will you get up quickly, dear, and wrap up warmly? We are afraid Toddles is very, very ill." Peggy's limbs trembled as she jumped out of bed.

"Miss Honeybun, tell me quickly, do you mean —is he dying?"

"There is great danger. Dr. Burton fears the worst; but with a child, whilst there is life there is hope."

"Then I killed him," said Peggy excitedly; and she seized Miss Honeybun's arm, "I did. Oh, do listen to me. I have not been open about it all. I tried to put it on others; but it was all every bit my fault. I insisted he should come with me that unlucky day, and I shall have killed my brother. What will mother think? I promised to look after the little ones, and I haven't kept my promise—and it has come to this." Peggy was in an agony of tearless sobs; there was no wish now to hide the truth, only to get rid of that burden she

had carried on her conscience. As long as Toddles was in a fair way of recovery she had eased her mind by the thought that explanations were useless; but now it had come to the worst, she felt that her little brother was dying, and she could hardly bear the thought. She would have liked to rush out into the street and tell everybody she met that she was the culprit.

"Hush, dear," said Miss Honeybun gently. "You must be quite quiet if you come. I must run back, but put on your things and follow me into the nursery." Left alone Peggy dressed herself, and then sinking on her knees, she prayed in no set words, but from the bottom of her heart, that her sin might not be visited upon her. The meaning of a prayer comes home very earnestly to the man, woman, or child who asks God to give them back a precious life, or who humbly prays that well-deserved punishment may be spared them. After this Peggy rose to her feet, and softly and sadly went towards the nursery. The circle round the little bed made way for her, and it was Mr. Fenwick who himself led her to the bedside where the little boy was breathing heavily, and looking as if death had already claimed him for his own.

"Father!" she whispered; "father, I killed him; it was my fault. I took him out that day he was run over. Can you ever forgive me?"

"Hush!" he answered, "don't disturb him, Peggy; he may be conscious a little before the end!"

"Is there no hope?" said Peggy, looking towards Dr. Burton, who answered gently, "These little

lives, Peggy, are in God's hands; but I doubt whether he can rally."

And so they watched with minutes that seemed hours, and hours that lengthened themselves out as if they were years, and yet there came no awakening, no crisis, till, when the morning dawned, Dr. Burton stooped down once more over the child, felt his pulse, and then looking up at Mr. Fenwick, said:

"Mr. Fenwick, do not trust too much to my opinion; but in my judgment Toddles has turned the corner without our knowing it. I think when Mr. Sturgeon comes he will say the same."

Peggy looked up, hardly believing the words she heard. She turned so pale that Miss Honeybun, noticing it, told her she had better not stay any longer. If there was hope she would need her strength; but Peggy only answered by saying she could stay, and that Miss Honeybun should be the one to rest, which was true enough.

This was how Peggy spent the early morning, and when the rest of the household were called they heard the good news that Dr. Burton and the other doctor both said that with great care Toddles might now pull through.

Then Peggy was sent to bed, and lay down, feeling that perhaps God had forgiven her as He had granted her prayer.

The party at breakfast was a very small one. Nelly took the head of the table. Carry, Bee, and Maurice were the only others present. Carry was very talkative, as everyone felt it a relief to hear that Toddles was a little better.

"Nurse came this morning and said my little

brother was not yet to be a hangel," said Bee, gravely repeating nurse's "h" with the evident feeling that the word was better, and altogether more impressive than without it.

"You ought to say angel," said Carry giggling. "Oh, Nelly, isn't it nice to have breakfast to ourselves; and how white you look! and, Nelly, you can't think how cross Mary is to-day; she was just like two sticks when I asked her to fasten my frock, because you weren't ready, and she said she wasn't used to such disorganized households; and Bee thought it had something to do with an organ, and Mary did pull her hair so, and said she wasn't hired to be school-room maid."

"Shut up! can't you, Carry," said Maurice, who was by no means in a pleasant frame of mind. "Do you know, Nelly, the detective's been here this morning and wanted to see you; he's going to call again very soon. I said you weren't up."

"I can't see him, Maurice!" said Nelly nervously. "Why must I? You can tell him everything—please do!"

"It will be no end of a bother," continued Maurice, thinking that Nelly deserved punishment. "If they catch him, or if they don't—if it wasn't for father's pearls I almost wish they wouldn't."

Carry had been listening to all this, she being the proverbial little pitcher with long ears.

"Was that what Mary meant about being considered a thief? Oh! she is cross. Do tell us, Nelly, who took Peggy's necklace!"

"A very *curious* person," said Maurice pointedly.

"Oh, Maurice, don't tease! Was there really a

robber, Nelly? When was it? Did you see him? Was that what made you ill yesterday?"

"Yes," said Nelly. She was too miserable even to scold Carry or to repress her.

Hardly had they done breakfast when the expected detective was announced. Carry and Bee were packed off upstairs, much to the former's sorrow, and Nelly, trembling with fear, had to answer the questions put to her.

"Are you sure, miss, that no one came into the room before or after the foreigner?"

"Yes, quite sure. I know he must have taken them."

"We detectives, miss, are never certain of anything till we see it with our own eyes, and then sometimes we have to disbelieve even them. If we had only had the clue a little sooner we should not have had so much trouble."

Mr. Fenwick here came in. He looked much worn with watching and anxiety.

"Any news of the thief?" he asked.

"Not yet, sir; but we are sure to find him sooner or later, unless he took the train to one of the seaports; but I fancy he would not care to travel with those things in his pocket. You are sure that was the name he gave you, miss?"

"Oh, yes. Yes; quite sure—Wolfgang König. My brother heard it as well."

"Ah! by the way," said Mr. Fenwick, "König —why, that was the very name that Von Bücher told me of. He said he had helped him as much as he could, but that he was a scamp. I fancy from the way he put it that he had been robbed by this very man, but did not care to prosecute

him. If only you had mentioned his name earlier, Nelly; however, it can't be helped."

"He said Herr Von Bücher refused him all help," said poor Nelly blushing. The detective smiled at the young lady's innocence, and Maurice felt all the more ashamed of being mixed up in the affair.

Mr. Fenwick wrote down Von Bücher's address for the detective, who then took his leave, having first examined the spot where the pearls had stood. Mr. Fenwick could not go to his studio this morning; but he was so thankful that Toddles had turned the corner that he could bear the other trouble in a way he would not have done had it come alone. He did not say anything to Nelly, and was even kinder than usual.

Certainly the Fenwick household was sadly disorganized, as Mary said, and the troubles had been brought on by the two eldest daughters, who should have been wiser, and who had sadly failed in self-government. At twelve o'clock, just when Peggy came down-stairs for the first time, who should drive up but Miss Bellew, and Peggy, looking eagerly out of the window, spied another visitor following the family friend.

"Nelly dear, quick!" she cried, "go and tell father that Miss Bellew is here, and then we can have Miss Neale all to ourselves."

Nelly obeyed, though she had not heard of Miss Neale before.

"Here you are, Margaret," said Miss Bellew, "and how is your brother? I was sorry to be so rude to you yesterday; but Lily said you didn't miss me, which I can easily imagine."

Peggy blushed and felt ashamed. She was so softened to-day that even the family friend came in for a share of good-will.

"We are all in such trouble, Miss Bellew, and some of it is my fault. Toddles nearly died last night; but they say he has turned the corner, and —and—it was my fault."

It was a very bitter pill for Peggy thus to tell Miss Bellew she was in the wrong; but Lily Neale's gentle eyes were upon her, and that helped her to be humble.

"Well, my dear, I told you that you weren't old enough to manage all these children; it's fortunate you haven't been the death of all of them; however, if he's better, that's all right."

Miss Bellew did not wish to spare Peggy, who could not help blushing still more, but Lily came to the rescue:

"I am glad your little brother is better; one can't help making a few mistakes. Uncle says to me, Lily, put that down to experience, and mind you don't allow it to be wasted experience."

Peggy wanted to tell about the pearls; but for once refrained from mentioning Nelly's faults. When Mr. Fenwick came down, Nelly followed him, and Lily Neale was taken to the back drawing-room, and proved a very comforting element, for she liked Peggy, and pitied the motherless girl. Nelly also was at once taken with Miss Neale, and began weaving a tale with a Lily for its heroine, till Miss Bellew interrupted the happy trio.

"Well, really, Nelly, how could you be so foolish? You want a good firm hand to guide you.

Your father will live in fear and trembling if you have no more common sense than that."

Nelly nearly cried. It was hard before "a stranger and all" to be held up to ridicule. Mr. Fenwick rescued her by coming to speak to Miss Neale, and to show her some beautiful prints which hung on the walls.

"I know what I had better do!" said Miss Bellew. "I will leave you Lily for a couple of days; she has more sense than all of you put together, except that good Honeybun, who might as well be a hospital nurse at once, I think. Now, Lily, don't refuse. I know it will be very disagreeable putting sense into these foolish children's heads; but you enjoy disagreeable things, I know. I sha'n't ask your leave, Mr. Fenwick, because I am only leaving you a blessing, and I am rather stupid just now, and can't take Miss Neale about. Show her the studio before I fetch her again on Saturday; that will be enough reward. She is one of those silly people who say they adore art."

Miss Neale laughed.

"You have said so much evil against us all, dear Miss Bellew, that you don't deserve to see any of us again;" and this light answer quite turned away Peggy's wrath, which was beginning to rise; but who could be angry at being classed with Lily Neale? With her in the house everything took a turn for the better. Peggy did not mind being advised by this friend, and the little ones were enchanted. The two days went quickly enough; if it had not been for those unlucky pearls the Fenwick house would have begun to

mend. Toddles was steadily improving, and Dr. Burton said that he had never known such a case of recovery before.

Mr. Fenwick took Miss Neale all over the studio, with Peggy and Nelly as interpreters; but he was surprised to find in this beautiful girl a real love of artistic works, besides a great deal of knowledge. She explained that her uncle made her read all sorts of books aloud to him, and so she was obliged to learn in spite of herself. Peggy thought her modesty very extraordinary, for she could not understand this virtue. Those two days were the happiest she had spent since her mother's death, and when Lily Neale returned to Miss Bellew even Mr. Fenwick said it was as if a bit of golden sunshine had disappeared, which simile Peggy kept in her mind, and when she ventured at last to write to Miss Neale, she called her "My dear sunshine;" but she put a big *private* at the top of her letter, being dreadfully ashamed of all sentiment.

CHAPTER XVII.

CAUGHT.

SEVERAL days went by, and nothing was heard of Wolfgang König or the pearls. Evidently he had been clever enough to elude the police, having had a good start of them. At present the pawnshops were being searched, and the police were watching those who were suspected of being receivers of stolen goods. But all this trouble had not been quite in vain. Nelly was very grateful to her eldest sister for the way she had come forward in her trouble; for Peggy had told her father that Nelly looked really ill, and that she must not be scolded any more, and she added:

"You know it is really my fault. I have been horrid to Nelly. I didn't mean to be, and yet I always thought if people did as I wanted them to do, everything would come right; but it can't be so, or I shouldn't have brought all this upon dear little Toddles."

Nobody had scolded Peggy, and it was for this very reason that she had taken herself more to task. If anyone had reproached her, she would have tried to excuse herself; but the fear of losing his boy had swallowed up all other feelings

in Mr. Fenwick. It was not what had been the cause that was worth considering now, it was what might be the result.

Even Carry was rather subdued, and when Peggy undertook her lessons, as the most disagreeable duty she could think of, the pert miss behaved with wonderful discretion. It had oozed out that her elders had both been indiscreet, so that she felt the virtue of the family depended upon herself and Bee. Maurice kept himself rather out of the way, and his temper was not at all improved by all the "fuss," as he called the family troubles.

To-day for the first time Mr. Fenwick went to his studio, his presence there being absolutely necessary, and Toddles so far recovered that he could ask for what he wanted.

"I shall not be home for luncheon, Peggy, but at three o'clock I should like you and Nelly to come with me to see Mr. Ewebank's picture; he begs us to come over before it is sent home to the purchaser. It will do you both good."

"Thank you!" said Peggy, with brightening eyes, "and Nelly will like it; because, do you know, father, she thinks you are still very angry about those pearls."

"I cannot cease to regret them, of course, but I hope it will be a lesson to her for all her life."

"We have had so many lessons this last fortnight," said Peggy, quite humbly for her; and Peggy's humility sat so oddly on her that her father laughed.

"Well, I have had some too; I expected wise, old heads on very young shoulders."

"Please, don't say that yet, father, I will try more; indeed Carry and I have only had one fight this morning, and I think I was in the right."

Just before luncheon Maurice, being released from his tutor, ran up to the school-room to speak to Nelly. He found her doing some plain work, whilst Carry was writing a letter to Arthur.

"I say, Nelly, will you come to the organ this afternoon?"

Nelly blushed, the very word organ was distasteful to her.

"No, thank you, Maurice, we are going with father; and oh, Maurice, I want to say something to you! Do you know, I think we were wrong about disinheriting Peggy. I have thought a good deal about it, and perhaps we did make things harder for her. I didn't see it in that light till lately, but—"

"She shouldn't have interfered so much; but it's just like women to do a thing and then funk it afterwards."

"Oh, Maurice!" said Nelly quite pained, but taking her courage in her two hands, as the French say, she added, "I don't care if it is like a woman, I shall tell Peggy about it and say I'm sorry; she has been so kind this week about—" Nelly couldn't say the word. Maurice shrugged his shoulders, and at that minute Peggy's clear tones were heard from below:

"Maurice, Maurice, here's Herr Von Bücher, and he wishes to see you; do come down. He says that he wants you to help him; it sounds so delightful, I hope you will."

Anything to do with music quite altered the

expression of Maurice's face; he ran down-stairs with great alacrity and found Von Bücher in the dining-room.

"I am going to take some luncheon with you if Miss Margaret allows me. And now, Maurice, your father has given his consent to your helping me in a pet scheme of mine for young musicians. I have engaged a large room or hall, where we shall get a good organ, there are also a few rooms with pianos for beginners; some young fellows who come up to London for good lessons cannot always procure pianos, or rooms to themselves, and other lodgers complain of the ceaseless scales, and so on. Now, my lads shall be able to spend as many hours as they like there in warmth and comfort. At present they must board themselves, but by and by, when we get others to take up this good work, we shall be able to board them at cheap rates. Think, Maurice, what a blessing we shall confer on England! We shall send out trained and well-taught fellows, who will earn good salaries as organists or masters before they have quite worn out their health and spirits."

Maurice's enthusiasm was at once kindled. Here at least was some work to his mind.

"And I may help you, Herr Von Bücher? But you have not heard me play lately, perhaps I am not good enough, but indeed I have improved."

"I do not make an offer that I do not mean to be accepted. Your soul is in it—that is what I want. In every walk of life give your soul to what you undertake, then all goes right. Your own progress shall be my especial care, for the

labourer must be paid. And you will be the link between me and my boys; some are very ignorant, only I have recognized the divine spark hidden beneath much rubbish."

"Then you have already found the boys, Herr Von Bucher? When can I begin?"

At this moment the rest of the "merry multitude" came down-stairs, and the visitor had a kind word for all of them.

"But what is this I hear of you, Miss Nelly? Do you know you have become a public character?"

Nelly blushed scarlet and murmured, "What do you mean?"

"You have got into print, always a much to be envied position, eh? I was especially interested because I knew both the parties."

Maurice looked rather guilty and said:

"Do you mean that horrid wretch, the man who tried to impose upon us, Wolfgang König? He trumped up something about you."

"Did he? I am not surprised at that. I am sorry to say he is a scamp, but I am indeed grieved you were taken in."

"Oh, it was my fault!" said poor Nelly, whose punishment seemed never at an end. "I really thought he was what he said."

"My dear child, don't be too much discontented at having been taken in, wise men have been in the same boat—I for one. I believed I was going to make something of that fellow, and—well, I ought to have had him up before the police; I was wrong it would have spared you this loss—"

"Father is sorry about the pearls, they were valuable, but he says they may still be found."

After this the conversation turned to other matters, and Miss Honeybun discovered she had some mutual acquaintances with the kind musician. As to his new scheme all the children gave him their sympathy, and he was pleased with it, knowing full well that the outside world of grown-up people would laugh at his plans for the good of musical boys, and would politely tell him he was wasting his money.

When he was gone, Nelly felt that she had found another friend. At all events, Wolfgang König had been able to deceive some one else, and behind this slight comfort the girl entrenched herself.

When Mr. Fenwick came home he was received with a chorus of voices, Maurice especially was full of his good fortune, and his father felt that at last something had been found that would interest his boy, and that that in itself was a great boon.

"Now, girls, are you ready? I have not a moment to waste; Mr. Ewebank will be expecting me." And when he started off, after first running up to have a look at Toddles, he could not help feeling proud of his eldest girl's brightness and of Nelly's soft beauty. Their deep mourning made him remember, however, how proud their mother had always been of her darlings. Was he making many mistakes with them, or would not his love be able to shield them?

"Do let us go by the Underground to-day," said Nelly, who had a special liking for the dimly

lighted underground ways, it reminded her of stories of secret passages and mysterious abodes of genii; to Peggy, however, it was only a horrid way of getting about, which smelt dreadfully of everything that was bad, especially near Baker Street.

Nelly was to have her wish to-day, however, and very soon the three were hurrying down to the platform waiting for the train to rush up.

"I am always so much afraid of these trains," said Nelly, "they look so wicked, as if they would like to sweep us off the platform and kill us."

"What a queer idea!" laughed Peggy. "Now, Nelly, take care, here it really comes; here's our carriage," and with the activity of a little woman of the world Peggy kept an eye on Nelly till they were safely seated in the carriage.

When they reached Mr. Ewebank's studio Nelly was allowed to dream as much as she liked. The studio was a large room built out into a garden; it had glass at the top with light coming in from the north; and it was full of pictures, and odds and ends of furniture, beautiful curtains, and eastern carpets, jars from every part of the world, and so many curious things that there was no time to see them all. The picture Mr. Fenwick had come to look at, represented a beautiful girl stepping down from her carriage to go into a grand house; she was dressed in white satin, and was turning her head to look for an instant at a poor, ill-clad flower girl, who, instead of trying to sell her last rosebuds, was gazing with wide open eyes of astonishment at the beautiful lady; her sister in the flesh, and yet so far apart from

her in every way. A world of pity and thought was expressed in the rich girl's face, and a sad, regretful wondering look was depicted on the features of the flower-seller. The picture was called, "*Are they Sisters?*" Nelly gazed at it a long time in silence, she was taking in some of the meaning, though happily too young to know the full purport of the story. Peggy's mind chiefly worked on the idea that the young lady was just like Lily Neale.

Mr. Ewebank was a quiet man who noticed more than he talked, and he took a fancy to Nelly's dreamy face. He even begged Mr. Fenwick to let him take a sketch of her, which pleased the father much.

"Come, make haste, girls," said Mr. Fenwick when they left the studio. "I think we can just catch the five o'clock train, or else we may have to wait ten minutes or a quarter of an hour."

They hurried on, and just as Mr. Fenwick squeezed himself into the narrow passage in front of the ticket-office he saw that there were only two minutes to spare.

"Here, this way, Peggy!" but looking round he noticed Nelly standing still as if horror-struck.

Peggy was by her side in a moment, and forgetting her good resolutions, said sharply:

"Nelly, how can you be so stupid? What are you staring at?"

"Oh, Peggy! I am sure I saw him there in front; he has gone up this other passage. What shall I do?"

"Saw whom? Never mind, we shall miss our train."

"But, Peggy, it was he, Wolfgang König, only in quite a different dress and no moustache; but I knew his eyes quite well. He didn't see me."

"Was it? Quick, Nelly, run up then and keep your eye on him, I will call father and a policeman."

Peggy was all energy now. Several persons turned round to look at the tall young lady who ran past them.

"Plenty of time, miss," called out an old gentleman kindly, "the train's not up."

Mr. Fenwick was looking decidedly put out.

"Peggy, where is Nelly? How very tiresome you are not to follow me; the train will be here in a moment."

"Oh! never mind that, father, come back quickly. Nelly's seen the robber; he's gone on to platform B, and if he gets into a train we shall never find him again."

Peggy was quite excited, and though Mr. Fenwick rather objected to what he fancied was a wild-goose chase, yet he hurried after her anxious about Nelly's disappearance. Up a flight of stairs they hastened, along a dark passage, and then down another flight leading to platform B. There was a distant whistle of a train, and Peggy looked up and down anxiously to see where Nelly could be, then hastening to the little waiting-room, she saw, much to her surprise, Nelly standing with her back against the door with Wolfgang König opposite to her. Mr. Fenwick also noticed this, and a little alarmed at once appealed to a policeman to come with him and take the man in charge.

Nelly had followed König at some little distance, meaning to do what Peggy had said, keep an eye on him, and in so doing she passed along the platform where only a few persons were sauntering quietly. There was nothing very wonderful in a young lady of Nelly's size being alone, and as she was dressed in mourning she did not attract any special attention, but when she reached the waiting-room she saw her enemy going in. At all events he was safe there, and Nelly stayed outside still keeping her "eye" upon him. She was trembling a little, but so anxious was she to recover her father's prized pearls, that she would not allow herself to feel any fear. "I must be brave," she said to herself. However, she rather overdid her part, for Wolfgang König at last became aware of some one looking at him. Their eyes met, and Nelly had no longer any doubt, even though König turned his head carelessly away as if he had been looking at a stranger. This made gentle Nelly very angry.

"I am sure he knows me; he *must* know me," she said to herself. "I gave him all the money I had, and he didn't look like that then." She was so irate that she walked boldly into the waiting-room, shut the door behind her, and placing her back against it, confronted the man she had once fancied was a hero.

"I know you are Herr Wolfgang König," said Nelly, colouring in her anger. "You need not pretend not to know me, you—you came to our house and—" The great imperturbability of her enemy staggered her a little, and she repeated:

"You are Mr. Wolfgang König."

"Pardon me, madam," was the answer. "I may resemble the person you mention, but my name is George Schmidt. Allow me to pass, as the train is coming."

"No, I won't," said Nelly. "You ought not to tell a lie. You are König. I know it. Don't you know that I gave you—?" Wolfgang König had looked at Nelly and calculated his chances of escape. He had seen that she was young and shy, and he knew she would never have the presence of mind to appeal to the public against him. The train was coming, and the bell rang. He could easily force her away from the door and be off. In his hurried calculation he had never thought she was not alone, for no one appeared to take any interest in their conversation. Unfortunately, just as he was approaching Nelly, determined to force his way past her, he saw through the window a tall gentleman hurrying forward followed by a policeman. He wished heartily he had not delayed, but had made off at the first recognition of Nelly; but now it was too late, though, as the door was opened, he tried to slip past, but he was seized by the policeman and Mr. Fenwick.

"I wish to give this man in charge," said the latter. "My daughter here will identify him as the person who stole some jewelry from my house last week. Nelly, you are sure, I believe."

"Oh yes!" said Nelly, half crying. "He has shaved off his moustaches, and doesn't look quite the same, but I know his eyes. I should know him anywhere. And please, father, if he will give them up, won't you let him go?"

"No, miss, there must be no compounding with a thief. This way, please. Will you follow me quietly, young man, or—?"

"Come away, Nelly," said Peggy. "Father says we can go home in a cab. He must just go and give in his name. Please, Nelly, don't cry, everybody is looking at us. How plucky of you to keep him so well!"

"I was so angry with him, Peggy. Fancy, after my giving him fifteen shillings, he had the courage to say he didn't know me! Wasn't it horrid of him?" There was something rather amusing in Nelly's view of the matter; and as the two girls were on their way home Nelly confided all the former episode about König to her sister, feeling that in Peggy's eyes she had a little retrieved her character by her courage.

Thus ended the memorable visit to Mr. Ewebank's studio.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LEFT ALONE.

"PLEASE, Peggy," said Toddles, "tell me all about the robber. I wish I had seen him." Toddles was propped up in bed having his tea, and Peggy was acting guard to let nurse go down. The eldest sister had a much more gentle manner now with Toddles. She felt that his life had been given to her the night she was so miserable, but the sight of him always made her feel humbled; she had learned one lesson which she could never forget.

These last few days Toddles had made such progress that the doctor talked about letting him get up soon. His leg was sound again, and they hoped that with great care there would be no bad effects left.

"Nelly caught him," said Peggy. "Wasn't it brave of her?"

"When I'm big I shall be brave too. When is Arthur coming home, Peggy? I am tired of bed. I wish I could get up and run about like other little boys."

"So you will, dear, with patience." But Peggy felt another pang of remorse. It was through

her fault that Toddles was suffering this long tedious illness.

"Do you remember going out with me, Toddles, before you were ill? I wanted you to go, and that was how you got run over by the cab."

"Was it?" said Toddles simply. With him there was no recrimination. He had obeyed, and there was an end of it for him.

"I think I remember," he continued. "You was buying socks for Arthur, with round lines on them. I don't remember the cab. Was I run over? How funny!"

"Yes. You saw father, and wanted to get to him. But, Toddles, will you hate sister Peggy for having hurt you?" Peggy knelt down by the bed and put her arms round her baby brother. Toddles stroked her face with his little thin hands and laughed.

"No. I loves you, Peggy, now you're so kind. But tell me about the robber."

Ah well! at all events Toddles would not reproach her. He hardly seemed to understand what she meant, and so she left the subject alone, learning at that minute somewhat of the meaning of the Bible words that we must all become as little children before reaching the kingdom of heaven.

"Did he give back your pearls, Peggy? I hope he hasn't lost them."

"I hope not. Father has gone to see about them, and that bad man will have to be punished. Perhaps he will be put in prison."

"I remember now I heard Nelly say she had a secret she wasn't going to tell you. Was it about

the robber?" Peggy blushed. All the others had not trusted her, and she deserved it; but it was hard that even the little ones knew it.

"Perhaps it was," she said.

"I'll tell you what, Peggy," said Toddles, seeing his sister looked unhappy. "I'll tell you what."

"Well, what?"

"I'll never call you *Peggy Pepper-pot* again, no, not even if Maurice does. You doesn't like it, does you, Peggy?"

"No, I don't. Mother didn't like it, you know, Toddles, so I don't think the others ought to call me so."

"It was only when you was *very* cross, Peggy," apologized Toddles. "You was cross sometimes, wasn't you?"

"Very often, I think, and so I am now."

"No, you're not cross now; but, Peggy, I want to tell you a secret. I does like Miss Honeybun. I hope she'll always stay here, and when I'm big I've promised to marry her." Toddles was so serious over this piece of news that Peggy could not help laughing.

However, Toddles' words suddenly reminded Peggy that Miss Honeybun's gentleness and goodness had been accepted as a thing of course, and that she herself had never recognized all she had done for them during this time of trouble.

"I wonder, if I had not been the head of the family," thought Peggy, "whether all this would have happened? I expect I have made a mistake all along." It is not nice to be conscious of this. Happily Peggy was too young and hopeful to

feel it for very long; and when nurse came up again she was trying to interest Toddles in hearing about Mr. Ewebank's studio. Anything to do with drawing delighted the little fellow; indeed, this propensity of using something that would mark had more than once brought him into trouble. He had made a wonderful panorama on the nursery-door, and indeed all over the walls, when nurse was out of the way, and burnt sticks were even more fascinating than pencils, so that more than once he had nearly set himself on fire.

"He's all the world like one of the plagues of Egypt," said nurse one day; "there's no warding off from his attacks when he's in one of his mischievous moods; but then one always loves them as gives one most trouble."

"Your pa is asking for you, Miss Margaret," said nurse this evening, "and they are all making such a noise in the dining-room it's like as if they were building up Babel again. Miss Nelly has been telling Mary about the robber, and I'm sure, miss, I'm glad he is caught, for such a piece of work as there's been down-stairs I never remember in your poor ma's time. Mary and cook said you and master has been looking cold at them as if they were the thieves of them bits of things, and when I kep' on telling them I was sure you nor master had no such thoughts in your minds they only said they knew better nor I did, and that it was a shame for innocent women to be put to such a trial."

"How stupid of them!" said Peggy. Really, what with her household cares and the burden of the others, she felt nearly in despair. "I suppose

I must be looking out for some more servants. I know if I were a cook or a parlour-maid I wouldn't be so touchy."

"You can't tell, Miss Margaret, what you would be like in another position. You see servants has feelings."

"Then they ought to be ashamed of showing them and giving so much trouble all for nothing." The head of the family would have the last word.

As Peggy was running down-stairs she was stopped by Mary, who looked like injured innocence itself.

"Please, Miss Margaret, I want to say that as the thief has been discovered I wish to—to—"

"To stay on, I suppose," said Peggy hastily; but she repented, for her answer called down a great deal of conversation upon her head.

"Well, miss, me and cook was quite of one mind that we wouldn't stay in a place where things of value disappeared. It would cast a shadow on our life. And no one knows how little I've slept since your things was lost."

"I'm very sorry; but it was quite your own fault, Mary. You knew us well enough to suppose we did not suspect you."

"Well, miss, do you wish me to go or to stay?"

"Just as you like," said Miss Fenwick with dignity; and for once Mary found that she had the worst of it, for Miss Peggy would not take her gracious condescension in a proper spirit. However, as she was very comfortable, and had nothing to complain of, she pocketed her feelings, and went down to cook to tell her Miss Margaret

seemed so put about at her going she had relented and meant to stay.

When at last Peggy entered the dining-room she found her father telling the others about the prisoner. He had been examined, and the pearls would be recovered when they discovered his lodgings; but he would have to be tried, and Mr. Fenwick was afraid some of them would have to appear against him.

"Not me, father?" asked Nelly almost crying; "indeed I couldn't stand up before everybody."

"I shouldn't mind one bit," said Peggy cheerfully; "if a horrid man comes and takes my things, why should I be afraid of saying so?" She could not understand Nelly's shrinking shyness.

"Remember, Nelly, *I* had nothing to do with getting him into the house," said Maurice in a lordly way; "it's all your doing."

"I don't agree with you, Maurice," said Miss Honeybun, who, when she did give an opinion, was very decided. "You had no business to let a stranger into the organ-chamber. I think you are the origin of all the trouble."

"Yes," said Mr. Fenwick, "I quite agree; but it is no good putting it on each other now. We must try and get out of these bothers as quickly as possible, and I hope it will teach Nelly not to believe every goose is a swan."

"Or every scamp a political refugee," put in Maurice. It was his turning against her which Nelly thought the bitterest part of her punishment. She had always looked upon Maurice as her champion. At this minute Mary entered

carrying a telegram. It was for Miss Honeybun, who opened it hastily.

"No bad news, I hope?" said Mr. Fenwick kindly.

"I am sorry to say that my father is very ill, and begs me if possible to come to him at York," said Miss Honeybun hesitating. She felt that, at this moment especially, she could but ill be spared. What was she to do?

Peggy turned quite red, for though she would not have acknowledged it for all the world, yet Miss Honeybun's presence had been certainly like that of an angel in the house; without her, humanly speaking, Toddles would not have recovered. Now that he was better, and would want amusing as well as nursing, there would be all the more need of help.

Mr. Fenwick, not being a woman, did not go into detail, but looked at things from a wide point of view. His child was better, and lessons must stop a little while, for of course Miss Honeybun must be spared.

"Pray, make your mind easy about the children," he said; "do not delay at all; you must catch the evening train. Peggy and Nelly will help you all they can."

"Yes, indeed," said Nelly; but Peggy said nothing, though she prepared to go upstairs and help Miss Honeybun to pack up.

Carry meanwhile, when her father was gone, danced round the room, dragging Bee with her, till this latter remarked gravely:

"Do stop, Carry, you disarrange me!"

"You odd child, wherever did you get that

word! Oh, isn't it nice! no more lessons for the present, or keeping in order from Miss Honeybun. She's ever so strict though she is so quiet —quite different to Peggy. Maurice, do you think Nelly will have to go before the judge? I wish it was me, I should like it!"

"Girls are always pert minxes!" said Maurice, "and like putting themselves forward."

Carry was afraid to retort; but it was true that she was a very pert minx, and she was wondering how she could earn a little notoriety. Here was Nelly, quite a heroine about nothing at all, whilst she was only one of "the little ones." It was really too hard.

When Miss Honeybun was ready, and she was waiting for the cab to come round, she tried to settle everything so as to leave as little confusion as possible behind her.

"I am afraid, Margaret," she said, "you will have a good deal to do in my absence; but now Toddles only wants ordinary care. I hope it will not be too much for you."

Peggy's courage rose with the occasion.

"Oh, no! thank you. I am used to it all, you know. There is only Carry to see after, and Bee is never naughty unless Carry makes her troublesome."

"You must keep a firm hand over Carry; but—" Miss Honeybun stopped, for Peggy's colour was rising. She did not like to be advised, so Miss Honeybun finished her sentence another way. "No work is too great for us, dear, if we ask the Highest Help. Write to me as often as you can, and I shall come back as soon as possible."

"It will be all right now," was Peggy's answer. "Nelly won't be so foolish again, and trust me for managing Carry." Peggy could not see how Miss Honeybun looked anxious at these words. So much self-confidence was not the way to be prepared for misfortunes; but on the whole Peggy was improved, and a character such as hers cannot be changed in a day; rather the subduing of it and the bringing it into subjection to a higher law requires the grace of God and the work of a lifetime.

When Miss Honeybun was gone Peggy did for a moment feel that there was a great blank in the house. She had not known before how such a quiet wise person has more influence than people are aware of. However, Miss Fenwick was not to be so easily cast down; she began bustling about with much of the old noisy determination which always rubbed Maurice up the wrong way, and sorely tried Nelly's nerves.

Maurice had begun to go every day to Herr von Bücher's hall as soon as he had done with his tutor, and very often did not come home till nearly dinner-time, so that Nelly relapsed into her dreamy ways, and was willing to give up Carry's lessons entirely to Peggy, taking for her share the entertainment of Toddles. In this capacity Nelly was excellent, and wove her romantic stories much to the little boy's edification and her own pleasure. Peggy wanted to manage, so why not let her do so? One dread, however, Nelly never lost, and this was about the coming trial of her former hero. The police had at last discovered his lodging on the night of the robbery,

and the pearls were found at a pawnbroker's, who pleaded ignorance of the value of the goods he had received. Nelly would be wanted as a witness, and perhaps Maurice would be called; but most likely it would be found to be merely an act of petty larceny, from the fact that he had been invited into the room by the young lady, and had in no way forced himself into the house. Into the various points of law Nelly did not enter; she only knew that she might have to appear in court and face all those people and the judge, and worst of all, Wolfgang König himself—the very idea spoilt her present life. She was so miserable that she longed to confide her troubles to some one; but Maurice had turned against her, and Peggy was too busy to attend; her father was worried by the whole affair, and a little impatient at the trouble it had given him. Thus it happened that instead of doing her best in the way of helping Peggy, Nelly gave herself up to a secret pity for herself, and never noticed how tiresome Carry was becoming under Peggy's management; and Peggy herself, afraid of owning that she could manage her younger sister less than ever, struggled on, insisting on obedience, and thereby causing daily fights, in which Carry often conquered from sheer holding out. Of the two, however, Peggy, though mistaken, was doing her best, and Nelly was merely giving up the struggle.

CHAPTER XIX.

A THING OF CLAY.

"IT'S extremely inconvenient," said Mr. Fenwick, rather impatiently some time after, "that order cannot be executed at the appointed time. Every minute is precious now, and we may be kept at the Middlesex Session House the whole day. I think you had better come with us, Peggy, it will be nicer for Nelly."

"Very well, father," said Peggy cheerfully. She was quite ready to accompany him, only there was Carry on her mind. Well, nurse must keep an eye on her, and no harm would come of that.

"Oh, please, may I come too, Peggy?" said Carry, when Mr. Fenwick had rushed away to visit his studio before starting for the Middlesex Session House. Nelly was almost weeping, and Peggy thought her very silly.

"Of course not, Carry; don't be tiresome. I shall set you a long-division sum to do whilst we are away, and Bee can sit with you. Nurse is very busy to-day. She has some work to get through, and won't want you bothering about in the nursery; besides, you make Toddles naughty, she says. Last time you sat in the nursery he

would exert himself too much, and the doctor said it wouldn't do. Now, Nelly, do look sharp a little, instead of moping about. I am going to order the dinner, and get some sandwiches for us to take, and, let me see—"

"Mrs. Importance!" whispered Maurice, and Carry said quite above a whisper:

"Peggy—Pepper-pot!" Peggy blushed crimson.

"Carry, you naughty impertinent child; you want a good shaking. I am sure you give more trouble than the two children together."

"I don't care," murmured Carry, tossing her head in the best approved and most aggravating way she knew of.

"Then you ought to be made to care, and you must learn the extra column of dates and do two more sums when we are out before you read any story-book at all."

"I sha'n't!" said Carry, very low indeed this time, so that Peggy, who knew by the murmur what the words were, thought it wiser to pretend not to have heard. "I shall tell nurse not to take you out unless you show her those sums are done."

"I'm not a baby!" said Carry, "and nurse has nothing to do with me."

"You are a baby, and a very troublesome one!" retorted Peggy, who had not yet learned that having the last word is by no means a sign of victory. "At all events, if you are so rude you must be punished for it, and I shall go straight up and tell nurse what I have told you." Peggy suited her action to her words, and as the dining-

room door shut with a decided bang, Carry's tongue was let loose.

"Nelly—"

"Well?"

"Nelly, isn't it too bad!—it's horrid of Peggy to be so domineering over me. She treats me just like she does Bee. I declare I won't stand it; and after all we *did* disinherit her—didn't we?" Carry was very proud of saying *we*, but Nelly was now shocked.

"Oh, Carry, you mustn't say that! Peggy *is* the eldest, you know, and she is very kind sometimes; besides, you shouldn't call her Pepper-pot. You know it always makes her angry, and she can't bear it."

"But she is just like pepper. I don't care what you say; she has no business to order me about so much and say nurse is to see if my sums are done. Besides, I don't want to go out with nurse; it's horridly dull."

Nelly heard her name being called by Peggy. It was time to get ready; but she waited a moment, hoping to soothe Carry's feelings.

"Please, Carry, don't be naughty to-day; it's all owing to me that—"

"I'm sure it isn't. If Peggy hadn't been so cross to you, you would have told her things. I heard you say it, Nelly."

Another call, and Nelly had to go away, feeling that the bad seed she had sown was bearing fruit. How could she scold Carry when the little sister quoted her own words to her. Nelly gave up reasoning at this point; her thoughts of her own troubles were bad enough.

How could she endure the ridicule of the lawyers and of her father's friends? If Nelly could have buried herself out of sight this morning she would willingly have done so. Very soon all was bustle and confusion; Mr. Fenwick drove up in a cab and called out to Peggy and Nelly. Maurice had gone on by himself.

"Make haste, Nelly! Pray, let's have no more dreaming!" said her father, whilst Peggy rushed in to Carry:

"Carry, I've told nurse, and here are the sums and the dates, and mind they are done by the time we come back again; and if nurse is busy, look after Bee, and,—oh, I can't wait any longer!" and off rushed Miss Fenwick, feeling that she had ordered two dinners, looked over the weekly bills, found a fault in the washing-book, written a note to a dressmaker, and finally found work to keep Carry quiet—all in the short space of twenty minutes. No one could say *she* did not work hard. But though she could deal with "business," Peggy was not so successful with human beings, and she had left Carry in a frame of mind that boded no good to much-tried nurse.

The morning was somewhat wearisome for the ill-used child. She did one sum, however, and found the second one too long for any human effort she felt capable of just then. The dates, too, were most tiresome. These were headed by "from The Creation, 4004," which time-honoured date Carry had lately heard questioned by Maurice; so she made up her mind she had better not learn this one till she was sure it was right. The "Call of Abraham" seemed to her more likely to be

correct; but after learning it she suddenly reasoned out that it might also be not quite accurate, and the consequence was Carry shut up the book with a bang, feeling that Peggy had no business to give her things to learn that weren't true. Next she went up to the nursery and had a game with Bee, till nurse declared "she couldn't have such a dust kicked up over Master Toddles' bed, and that after dinner they should go for a walk with her."

Carry said nothing, but she remembered that her sums were not done, so that most likely she would not be allowed to go out—that is, if nurse remembered. Evidently Carry had "got out of bed the wrong way," as Arthur was accustomed to tell her. She felt naughty, and wished to try how far she might go without rousing her elders. Peggy had only made her worse. Dinner in the nursery, too, was such a trial that Carry really behaved abominably.

"Now, Miss Carry, put on your things at once. I'm sure you're more trouble than twenty Miss Bees—she's an example to you, that she is."

"Oh! Bee has it all her own way, and so of course no one ever has to scold *her*."

"I'm sure some children are that contrary, they seem as if created to worrit one," said nurse. "Now, Master Toddles, here's your book and a pencil, and Mary will come and bring her work up here, so mind you are a good boy." Toddles nodded. With a book and a pencil he found it easy to be "a good boy." It was only when Carry was dressed that nurse remembered Miss Peggy's strict command to see that the sums were done.

"Miss Carry, is your summing done?"

"I don't know what you mean by summing," said Carry rudely.

"Just you bring me your slate, there, and I'll see. Miss Peggy said you was not to go out till you finished two sums."

"I haven't finished two. I've done one, and that was long enough."

"You would have done better to have been quiet with your slate, Miss Carry, instead of worriting about before dinner. Now, dearie, can't you finish it up quick?"

"I'll stay at home. I'm sure I don't care," said Carry, tossing her head; and nurse being at last provoked, took Bee by the hand and went out, leaving Carry in the dining-room to repent a little in her leisure. It was fine and bright, and a walk in the park would have been a real treat. Only then she would have had to do as Peggy said, and Peggy was so cross; also, Carry, being of a curious disposition, was very anxious to know how the trial was going on.

At Nelly's first examination the magistrate had been very kind, and the evidence of a theft having been perpetrated was so plain that the German had been committed to trial without hesitation; but at the trial Maurice had said Nelly would be questioned and cross-questioned, and Carry thought herself hardly used for not having been allowed to go to court. It was very dull all alone in the dining-room. The sum became more tiresome and difficult every moment she thought of it without trying to do it. Everybody was horrid, and became *horrider;* nurse and Peggy shared the

privilege of being *horridest.* Carry was decidedly very naughty to-day, and her conscience being much disturbed, she could not even solace herself with a story-book. No; she would just punish Peggy and nurse, and go out without leave. Carry remembered her last escapade, and meant to keep clear of the doctor. But she wanted to be able to say, when the others came in, that she too had been out. Carry had no fears of losing herself, she was sharp enough to take care where she went.

She walked out into the passage, and by chance saw her father's study door open. Then an idea came into her head. The key of the studio door hung on its accustomed peg. Mr. Fenwick always put it there when he was at home, or out somewhere else. Why should she not take it and go to the studio? This key unfastened the door leading to the private room, the great outside gate being of course open as long as the work-people were there. Carry liked this idea so much that she jumped on a chair, unhooked the key, and, without pausing to think a second time, opened the front door and walked out. She was so proud of passing down the square alone, she wondered if anyone would see her. Perhaps the girls who lived at No. 23 would notice her. They came to the Square sometimes, but were so strictly watched over by a very stern governess that they looked prim and miserable, and were in consequence very much pitied by the Fenwick family. Carry knew the way to the studio as well as Peggy herself, and as she walked on rather quickly she looked like a small edition of

her eldest sister. Arrived there, she passed through the great gate and turned into the passage leading to her father's room, ran up the stairs, and opened the door. Once in, Carry felt half-proud and half-frightened. She looked round, almost expecting to see her father's face in some corner; but nothing unnatural appeared. Only, on a small table by the window stood a beautiful head and bust modelled in clay. It was quite a new sight for Carry. Evidently her father had been working at it up to the last moment, and had had it brought up to his study.

Carry sat down near it and examined it. At all events this would prove she had been here if she ever dared to let out the secret, for none of the others had seen it. Carry had carried on a conversation in her own mind between herself and Peggy. How Peggy would say that she was telling a story if she ventured to mention father's new bust, and how Carry would answer that she wasn't, and then how gradually it would come out, and Peggy would be punished, and—

At this moment Carry heard steps below on the stairs. It was a man coming up to the studio, walking slowly and deliberately, so that the wood-work creaked below his footsteps. Who was it? A nervous dread seized Carry. She glanced at the door, but saw she had left the key outside. If it was one of the workmen, what could he want? He must know her father was out. Carry looked round to see if she could hide anywhere; but the room not being very big, did not offer much shelter. There was, however, a large plaster-cast in one corner that would

perhaps hide her if she crept in. Another step on the stairs, more creaking, and Carry, with a sudden movement of fright, jumped up, made a dart towards the spot; but then, oh, horror! a terrible crash was heard, a noise that made Carry's pride and pertness disappear as if by magic, for at her very feet lay the table and the bust, not a beautiful form any longer, but a mass of fragments. Carry never stirred again. She stood still regarding this terrible piece of work as if spell-bound. She was no longer afraid of the manly steps, because that fear was merged in this greater one; and when, after an instant more, her father's head man rushed in, he too stood still from sheer astonishment and dismay.

"Bless me! whatever does this mean? Where have you come from, missy? Don't you know the master is out? And you don't mean to say you did this? Good gracious! whatever will the master say? And however did you get in? Master told me to come here and see the model before I went away, he was so pleased with it this morning. Oh, missy, missy!"

"I—I—" began Carry, whose face was as white as a sheet, "I thought I would come here and—and see things. It was you who frightened me, Norris. I tried to hide. Will father be very angry? Oh! do pick it up and see if you can't put it to rights." Norris, in spite of his dismay, could not help laughing.

"Lor! missy, as well think of putting a smashed egg together again. It's a bad business. Master's been on at that model for over a week; and it was only this morning he says to me: 'Why,

Norris, I've just got this pretty near as perfect as I can make it.' You see, missy, if it was flesh and blood there might be something done by sewing up, or a doctor of some kind; but this sort of stuff isn't so accommodating. However you could come here passes my comprehension."

"Oh! don't, Norris," half-sobbed Carry. "I wish I had never been near this horrid place. If father had taken me with him it wouldn't have happened, so it's all his fault; but, oh, Norris! do pick it up and see if you can't do *something*. I will give you all my money in my money-box; I will indeed."

"No, missy; I'm sorry for you; but all the king's horses couldn't do nothing with this, nor all the king's men, as the rhyme says. You must just tell the master the truth; he is never unfair. There was Jones as spoilt a head last year; but the master didn't say nothing to him, as it was the fault of one of the tools."

"I don't know whose fault it was except mine. That's the worst of it—oh, dear!" and Carry did really cry now, an event very rare with her, and therefore all the more distressing.

"Well, missy, it's no use crying. Come along with me. I'm going past your house with a letter, and I'll take you back. Whatever do you go out alone for? It's not what the master likes, I fancy."

The rough man was very kind-hearted, and soon a subdued, heart-broken Carry was walking near Norris, in his working-clothes, along the street and down the Square. Of course at that moment the girls of No. 23 looked out

of the window, and oh! worse and worse! they laughed at her and her companion. When Carry reached No, 13, and just as she was saying good-bye to the kind workman, a cab drove up to the door, and at the cab-window Miss Honeybun's kind, gentle face appeared. Regardless of the driver, or of Miss Honeybun's attempts to find her purse and gather up her small possessions, Carry rushed up to her.

"Oh, Miss Honeybun! I am glad you are come. There's no one at home but me, and I'm in dreadful, dreadful trouble. Do help me."

"My dear Carry, what is the matter? And do control yourself. Hush! hush! my child, don't cry. Here's eighteenpence, cabman, and that is sixpence over your fare. Where's Mary. How do you come to be walking about alone?"

At last Miss Honeybun was allowed to get into the dining-room, and then she asked Carry to explain, first saying:

"My father has taken such a decided turn for the better that I settled to come back at once. I never thought of finding you in mischief, Carry; and where are the others?"

Carry was in tears, and so unlike her usual pert self that Miss Honeybun could not understand what was the matter.

"Since you've been away Peggy has been doing my lessons, and—and she was cross with me, and so I was cross too; but this morning she was ever so cross, and said I wasn't to go out till I had done my sums; then father came back to take Nelly and Peggy to the trial. I did want to go; but father wouldn't take me, and then

nurse was cross too, and left me at home, all because Peggy said so, and—"

"My dear child, do tell your story without so many times using the word cross about other people. Well, and so you ran out without leave?"

Here, Carry sniffed and cried, and rubbed her handkerchief very hard all round her face.

"Yes; I went to the studio, only just for fun, you know, Miss Honeybun; and then, oh, dear, what will father say? I upset a stupid table with one of his clay things on it, and it all went smash. The face is all broken now, and quite spoiled, Norris said."

Miss Honeybun understood why her pupil was so subdued. This was indeed a terrible piece of mischief.

"I ought not to have left you," she said sadly; "but I could not help myself. As to its being your sister's fault, it is nothing of the sort. You have never made up your mind to obey, and you see what this obstinacy has come to."

"Will father be very angry? Do help me, dear Miss Honeybun, and I'll never, never do it again."

"I cannot help you now, Carry. However, I will tell your father you are sorry; and now sit down and finish the sums, whilst I go and see Toddles."

CHAPTER XX

OUT OF OFFICE.

THERE was quite a sensation in court when a slight pale delicate-looking girl appeared in the box as a witness against Wolfgang König, alias many other names; and there was not a man there who did not pity the young lady who was so very shy and nervous as hardly to be able to answer the questions put to her. They wanted to make Nelly say she had given him the pearls; and when the facts were drawn out that she had offered him money, believing him to be a political refugee, there was a laugh in the court which covered poor Nelly with confusion; before this she had not dared look at the prisoner; but now for one instant she glanced toward the dock, and noticed that the man who had taken her in, himself smiled at the idea of his having been a refugee of any kind. This one glance dispelled Nelly's castles in the air and dreams of heroic actions more than anything else. From that moment she was cured of much of her folly, only the lesson was a bitter one. Still worse, there was a horrid man who made fun of her; he spoke so unfeelingly of young ladies who believed what was told

them by a man who had dark eyes, or who could play a musical instrument; he added that this young lady in particular had almost invited the prisoner to take the jewels that were placed so near to his hand, by her great confidence in human nature. The charge of burglary could not be entertained for an instant, because the confiding young lady had begged him to wait in a room alone till she could procure him five shillings from her money-box. (Here there was a laugh instead of admiration of the heroine.) Whilst waiting for this token of her charity the prisoner had seen a case in which reposed a string of valuable pearls in full view. If his past history had been more creditable his next proceeding might have been called kleptomania. He certainly had no intention, on entering the house, of stealing pearls, as he could not have guessed that pearls were to be had so easily. It was a sudden impulse, a momentary forgetfulness of the rights of citizens to keep what was their own, to use the blackest word—it was merely a case of petty theft. For this the jury could not give a very heavy sentence; in truth, in face of the facts, it would be impossible to say whether the prisoner were guilty even of that; but if the jury found that the pearls could hardly have been taken in a moment of forgetfulness, they must put out of their minds the value of the thing taken, and merely remember that every inducement had been given the prisoner to appropriate any little thing that might help him in his trouble.

After a less amusing summing up from the judge the gentlemen of the jury consulted among

themselves, and gave as their verdict that the prisoner was guilty, and the judge sentenced him to six weeks' imprisonment, but warned him that if he did not mend his evil ways his downward course would not stop there. He had talent; but, instead of using it to earn an honest livelihood he was making it help him in a life of dishonesty.

"Oh, father! it was dreadful," said Nelly, as almost beside herself she got into the cab waiting for them at the door of the court. "I never thought it would come to this; I wish I had told you, Peggy." Peggy was silent; she had at last learnt that Nelly was not more to blame than she had been herself. Before her mother's death all had gone peaceably; she had been the chain of love that had bound them together; but Peggy's rule had not taken love into consideration, only her own power; and she had failed, utterly failed.

"Now I hope that is an end of this business," said Mr. Fenwick somewhat wearily. "I have wasted the whole day in this wretched court, when I could easily have given the last touch to that head. Ah, girls! you have not seen it, but it is one of the best bits of work I have done for a long time."

"Here we are," said Peggy suddenly. "How white you look, Nelly! Please don't 'take on' any more, as nurse says; it is all over, and the pearls are safe." Nelly was grateful for Peggy's consolation; she felt that after all her sister always came forward to help her in time of real trouble. This day Peggy regained Nelly's love; she was

only one out of "all the others," but still it was a reward she was very grateful for.

"Miss Honeybun has come, please, miss," said Mary as she stood at the door.

"I am glad!" cried Peggy with genuine pleasure. After all, the burden of responsibility was becoming too heavy for the small prime-minister. Mr. Fenwick also breathed a sigh of relief.

"Dear Miss Honeybun," cried Nelly as this good lady came hurrying down the stairs.

"I hope your father is really better," added Mr. Fenwick, whilst Peggy went and gave her a good hug; it was the first genuine affection she had shown her, and Miss Honeybun secretly felt pleased. Peggy was good at heart, if only her pride and her good opinion of herself could be taken down.

"Toddles seems going on as well as possible," she said gently. "Only I am sorry to tell you, Mr. Fenwick, that Carry is in great trouble."

Mr. Fenwick, who was taking off his coat, turned round hastily.

"Nothing of importance, I hope, surely we have had enough trouble." Peggy's heart leaped into her mouth. She remembered the fight she had had with that tiresome younger sister.

"It isn't anything really bad, is it?" asked Mr. Fenwick.

"It appears she did not like some lessons she had to do, and so had to stay at home to finish them, and being alone she went off to the studio, and—" Miss Honeybun herself was frightened at the look in the sculptor's face.

"Well," he said impatiently, "it was your fault,

Peggy, for saying she was to stay at home. Why didn't nurse take her? Carry, you know, isn't fit to be left alone." I suppose she is back now?

"Yes; she did not stay long; but—"

"But what?" Peggy hardly dared look at her father; he disliked above everything that his children should go to the studio without leave.

"But the worst is, I am afraid she did some serious mischief to one of your models—in fact, poor child, she is so much troubled and sorry I promised to tell you; she turned over a table—"

"With my new work on it—is it possible?"

Mr. Fenwick was too much grieved for more words; his grief was far worse than his anger to Peggy.

"It was my fault," she said, the floodgate of her pride giving way and letting loose remorse. "I was so put out with her about her lessons; and—oh father! please forgive me! Everything has gone wrong with us since—since I took the head; I suppose I am not fit for it. Father! do speak one word—don't look like that. Do put Miss Honeybun over us all; I am sure she will manage better than I have done. Father!—"

Mr. Fenwick was putting on his coat again; it was only this last appeal that made him open his close-shut lips:

"Yes, Peggy; everything has gone wrong since you took the lead. I am afraid I trusted you too much, but—I am grievously disappointed. I think the best thing you can do is to give it up to a person we all can have confidence in. Miss Honeybun, don't wait for me—pray go on as usual."

He opened the door and went out, leaving

Peggy in a frame of mind more easily conceived than described. If her father had comforted her or received her self-accusations in another spirit it would have been easier to bear and failure would have been made less bitter; but his full acceptance of her words, the bitterness of his tone, all made her angry. For one moment she thought she would retreat—she would not accept Miss Honeybun over her; but then the nobler element in her nature conquered. She deserved all her father said and more; why should she be hurt by it? With a heroism at which we must not smile Peggy put her hand into her pocket, drew out a large bunch of keys, which had been her pride and her glory, and silently handed them to Miss Honeybun in token of submission.

Even now the girl half hoped they might be returned to her; but no, Miss Honeybun took them from her and said gently:

"Thank you, Peggy dear!" And then Miss Fenwick, the deposed head of the family, fled to her room, little guessing that Miss Honeybun too had had a struggle to do as she had done, but that she had so much appreciated Peggy's effort that she wished to do nothing to hinder it. She wanted her to acknowledge her failure, so that in the future this great lesson might never be forgotten.

All the other trials Peggy had undergone seemed light in comparison with this one. That her father should have accepted her resignation —nay, even desired it—seemed so terrible that it was some time before she could quite realize it. How the others would despise her! how they

would hint all sorts of things to her! Peggy was nearly overwhelmed with shame; she felt as if she would never be able to leave her bedroom, and began to think seriously of leading a hermit life. If she could not be head of the family, had she not better go away altogether? After a time less painful thoughts came into her mind; then she remembered Lily Neale, whose influence had first made Peggy pause in her course of self-pleasing, for ruling was Peggy's pleasure, and to be under orders her misery. Little by little, as she knelt by her bedside with all these feelings surging through her brain, a holier influence prevailed. The cup of suffering was very bitter to drink—all the more so because her own actions had prepared the draught. But the determination that had made Peggy a ruling power was there still, and it now helped her to conquer the baser side of her nature; she would try to be brave. After all, if the others did scorn her, it was perhaps her own fault that had brought her to this state of things.

It was long after the tea-bell had rung that Peggy rose from her knees a sadder and a wiser girl. She went and looked at herself in the looking-glass, and saw how unlike the usual Peggy she appeared; but she would not pause for long consideration—no, she had made up her mind, and she would do it. It!—what was it?

With head erect and firm step, but with a very fluttering heart, Miss Fenwick walked downstairs, paused one moment at the dining-room door, and oh, misery! she heard Mary clearing away the tea-things. Could she say her say

before her? This piece of terrible humiliation Peggy had not anticipated. For one second she thought she would beat a retreat; but no, she clenched her hand with determination and murmured:

"No, no—I will do it, I must do it!" and then with a supreme effort which few who did not know Peggy thoroughly could appreciate, she entered the room. Without looking about her, or indeed almost without looking at anyone in particular, she said in her clear, firm, young voice:

"I want to tell you all something, and Mary too; I—I am going to resign—I mean father thinks I am not fit to be the head of his house any longer. I have done everything wrong when I meant to do right, and no end of misfortunes have happened all through my fault and bad management. And now I give up everything to Miss Honeybun. I did think, that as mother used to trust me, I could have done it; but I see I was wrong, and I hope father will forgive me and all the others too."

There was half a second's pause—a pause which was more terrible for Peggy than for any of the others; but then it was Nelly who jumped up from her chair and ran towards her sister. She slipped her hand into the deposed sister's arm and said, fancying Peggy had accused them:

"Oh, Peggy! indeed we don't think so now. We did say unkind things about you once, and I am sorry for it—so will the others be; but indeed, dear old Peggy, there is no one who is so ready to help any of us as you are; and if I—I—"

At this moment there was heard a kind of

sniffling and sobbing combined from a corner of the room as Carry whimpered:

"Please forgive me, Peggy, and don't say what you did say. It's me that father ought to be angry with."

But Peggy only shook her head sorrowfully; she had reasoned it all out, and nothing could move her now—certainly not Carry's repentance, which had come too late for both of them. Mary had stared at Miss Margaret with wide-opened eyes, hardly believing her ears, and had then collected the tea-things and run down to tell cook, who ran up to tell nurse.

"Who ever would have thought it of Miss Margaret!" said cook; "the pleasure she takes in ordering everybody about, too—Lor'!"

"We shall be a deal more comfortable under Miss Honeybun, a quiet lady as doesn't fuss folks," said Mary; and nurse answered:

"Miss Peggy has a mighty quantity of good stuff in her; and if she's too young to rule everybody, why that ain't her fault, but just circumstance. As to Miss Honeybun being a quiet lady, that's all make-believe—she's a deal more strict than ever Miss Peggy was, as you'll find out. But there, it's a better arrangement than the present one, and Miss Peggy will live to be thankful for it."

Down-stairs the crisis was put an end to by Miss Honeybun's first command to Peggy:

"And now, dear, come and drink a cup of tea I have been saving for you." And though Peggy wanted to say, "No, thank you," being in a mood to decline all food, yet, wishing to be true to her

word, she meekly sat down and did as she was bid. A very unheroic ending to her reign; but it is in little things especially that great minds show themselves to be superior to weaker spirits, and Peggy was altogether a grander character as she sat drinking that cup of tea than she had been all these months as mistress of her father's household.

"I say, Peggy," said Maurice, who had kept silent all this time, "we must all beg father to forgive Carry. She's been crying her eyes out; and I think she is punished enough, don't you?"

It was the first time Maurice had said "*we*" including Peggy; and though the girl knew she had deposed herself, yet she felt that in the eyes of the others she was now in reality their elder sister.

CHAPTER XXI.

CONCLUSION.

SOME months after the events last related Miss Bellew's carriage stopped at No. 13, and that lady herself knocked at the door.

"Who's at home?" she asked of Mary.

"Miss Honeybun is upstairs, ma'am, and the young ladies will be in soon."

"Very well, that will do." It was a hot summer's day. When Miss Bellew found herself in the pleasant drawing-room,

"Humph!" she said looking round. "This room looks a great deal tidier than when Miss Fenwick ruled!"

At this moment Miss Honeybun appeared, followed by Bee and Toddles.

"Well," said Miss Bellew, "I was glad to hear from that poor man, whom I saw lately, that he was pretty comfortable at home—he said very comfortable; but I never believe all that men say."

Miss Honeybun smiled. "Indeed, I think Mr. Fenwick was right. We are *very* comfortable, and dear Peggy is my right hand."

"Well, I don't mind telling you that I thought she was too obstinate to give in, but I was wrong.

Yes, certainly, and I am glad I was wrong; and so she has gone back to her books?"

"Yes, she and Nelly go off to the High School every day, and Peggy is so eager over examinations and other things at school that she has no time to think of her hardships. And Nelly takes her cue from her sister, and has almost forgotten how to dream."

"Well, that is a good thing! Really when I read of that trial in the paper I was quite ashamed of my acquaintances. And what about that pert Carry?"

"She is wonderfully improved, and goes to school with her sisters, and you see the little ones are as well as possible, but Toddles wants care."

"I am sure they all owe it to you, Miss Honeybun, for a more unfortunate family than this was when you first came it would have been difficult to find."

"It is all owing to Peggy," said Miss Honeybun. "What could I have done without her help, because, after all, the others do admire her very much? Ah! here they are."

There was a sound of merry voices, and in another minute Peggy entered, looking as bright and clever as of old, but a great deal more gentle in her ways. All the anxious manner and irritability of temper had disappeared, for losing the weight of responsibility had restored to Peggy much of the good temper she had formerly possessed.

"Miss Honeybun," cried Nelly, not noticing that the family friend was sitting there, "Peggy has gained the prize of her form; only fancy; isn't it nice?"

"And such a jolly lot of girls in that form too," put in Carry, who was anxious to show off her knowledge of school terms.

"Oh, Carry!" said Peggy laughing, "you know Miss Bellew says we are to call jolly lot 'a merry multitude.' Nelly, here is Miss Bellew."

"I can't pretend to be a political refugee, my dear (how Nelly blushed), but I have come to tell you a piece of news, Margaret. Lily Neale is coming to live with me. Her uncle has died, and the aunt is going to a married daughter. Now, where does your father mean to take you these holidays? because we might all join, and you and Lily can decide if you will be friends."

Peggy had been rather dreading the topic of lodgings by the sea, it reminded them all so much of their mother. Besides, Miss Honeybun was to have her holidays, and Peggy feared that with Arthur to look after she might once more fall into the old difficulties. She had a nervous dread of taking back her power. Now, however, a delightful probability was held out to her. Lily Neale would be with her and help her.

"Well," asked Miss Bellew, "I suppose you will not like the idea if proposed by me, Peggy? I know you are not very fond of advice."

"Nobody likes advice," said Miss Honeybun, interposing; "they only accept it, with or without gratitude as the case may be."

At this moment Mr. Fenwick appeared; he was looking much more cheerful than formerly, for his children had not lately brought him into disgrace or trouble. Miss Bellew proposed her plan in her own blunt way.

"We can take a house at some unfashionable seaside place, and Lily shall help to amuse us."

"Do you mean take care of us?" asked Mr. Fenwick laughing.

"Well, well—call it what you like, only pray don't drag me into the papers. However, let me congratulate you on not having been before the public lately. Lily Neale will do as eldest sister for these wild young people."

But here Miss Bellew had reckoned without "the others," for there was a chorus from them.

"We don't want another eldest," said Nelly, colouring deeply.

"Peggy's our own sister," cried Toddles.

"I loves you, Peggy," whispered Bee, sidling up like a kitten.

"Peggy's a deal more pluck in her than Miss Lily Neale," said Maurice, speaking with authority on the subject of "*pluck*."

"Our Peggy suits us best, you see," said Mr. Fenwick, putting his arm round Peggy's shoulders; "but I think your plan delightful all the same." And Peggy felt humble and thankful. After all, by gentleness and submission she had earned what she most wished, the good opinion of "the others," and of her father; and she knew now that had she not mended her ways she would never have been anything else in the minds of the merry multitude but "*Peggy Pepper-pot*."

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